

# CONTINUITIES - DISCONTINUITIES

Edited by  
GYÖRGY GYARMATI  
and  
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SECRET SERVICES AFTER STALIN'S DEATH  
IN COMMUNIST CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE



The studies of this volume grant a glimpse into the metamorphosis of the secret services of the various Central Eastern European satellite states after Stalin's death. While each study touches upon the low-key corrective measures leveled at the Party and state leadership apparatuses of their respective countries, they largely focus on the unfolding process of the reorganization(s) of the secret services, and the reprogramming of their "positions of power" within the system. With regard to the general situation of the satellite states towards the end of Stalinism, studies dedicated to the contemporary German Democratic Republic, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Bulgaria and Hungary show a strong convergence on two major points. One was that the economy and all public services relying on redistribution were on the verge of collapsing; and the other was their remarkably similar assessments of the reorganization of the secret services, which had gained too much power under Stalinism, even over the ruling communist party. Regarding the post-Stalinist period and the de-Stalinization process, the studies also discuss the responses of the state security bodies across the Soviet Bloc, as well as the organizational and methodological

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## Continuities and Discontinuities after Stalin's Death

*A Foreword by the Editors*

*On March 2, 1835, the day of the death of Francis I, Emperor of Austria and King of Hungary, a large crowd had gathered in the courtyard of the Hofburg Palace in Vienna. When the proclamation was made, many people burst into tears, at which point the court chamberlain who had made the proclamation tried to console them by saying,*

*"Do not cry, everything shall remain the same."*

*To which a voice from the mourning crowd replied,*

*"We know, that's why we're crying!"*

According to our current historical knowledge, the above quoted anecdote received no "encore" in March 1953, in the days when the Soviet Union and its satellite states cried crocodile tears under the guise of the "statewide mourning" of Stalin. We do know, however, that due to a misprint, the Hungarian daily newspaper *Népszava* ['The Word of the People'] informed Budapest not of the "astonished mourning" of the people ['megrendült gyász'], but of an "ordered mourning" ['megrendelt gyász'].<sup>1</sup>

The works of Hanna Arendt, Zbigniew Brzezinski, and Carl Joachim Friedrich have traced the general characteristics of

<sup>1</sup> *Népszava*, March 6, 1953. Béla Bodó, the editor of the day, was imprisoned for six months by the State Security Authority for the misprint. See Murányi, Gábor. 2004. "A múzsa pusziája" ['A Peck from the Muse']. In Murányi, Gábor: *A múlt szövedéke* ['The Plexus of the Past']. Budapest: Noran, p. 374.

totalitarianism from the past to the present, which are as follows: (1) a closed, exclusivist ideology; (2) a one-party system; (3) central direction and control of the economy through state planning; (4) a monopoly on culture and the means of communication; and (5) a secret police network infiltrating every social sphere of life. Despite the inevitably static nature of politological typifications, these characteristics also correspond with Stalinism, although the model does not seem to fit the extremities of Stalinism, such as the "cult of personality," which was unique even within the concept of the cult of leadership, or the way Soviet national Bolshevism was implemented without any theoretical questioning of internationalism (or perhaps to outright replace it.)

The model mapped from the rigid snapshot of totalitarianism described above might comprehend the general theme of our present inquiries, which is Stalinism and the De-Stalinization process within the Soviet Bloc, but from a historical perspective, we cannot ignore the fact that the basic criteria of totalitarianism were also characteristic of the systems operating within the control radius of the Soviet communist project, both during and after Stalinism (and in the case of Soviet Russia, even *before* the implementation of the Stalinist system). Therefore, with regard to our research on certain branches of the De-Stalinization process, we must also determine the unique characteristics of Stalinism within the conceptual framework of totalitarianism, as the various satellite states implemented different political measures at different times to suppress these specificities, with the purpose of legitimizing the "original characteristics" of autochthonous Soviet (Bolshevik) communism.

The apparent mismatch between traditional notions of totalitarianism and the unique characteristics of Stalinism might be responsible for the emergence of different interpretations as to where Stalinism should be placed within the framework of Soviet communism. According to traditional, contemporary explanations, Stalinism was a deviation, an extreme derivation of the Marxist-Leninist theoretical vision of communism, and an excessive reign of terror compared to the first decade of the Bolshevik one-party regime. (For now, we shall not discuss the differences between the original

Marxist scenario and the Bolshevik reign implemented by Lenin in Russia.) To use an awkward comparison to the French Revolution, contemporaries believed that the thirty years of the Stalinist regime constituted a Jacobin dictatorship between two *Girondes*, where the death of Stalin (and the execution of Lavrentiy Beria), the newly formed collective leadership (the Directory or Presidium), and the speech of Nikita Khrushchev in February 1956 was the turn that attempted to reverse the *Thermidor*. (They promised rehabilitations, and to go "Back to Lenin!" with a bit of Marxist renaissance thrown in.) However, this contemporary explanation had been lopsided, partial, and inconsistent from the beginning, and continued to be so, mostly due to practical considerations: namely that all subsequent brands of Soviet leadership, whether motivated by domestic political reasons or the necessity of social legitimacy, continued to heavily rely on Stalin, the leader who had transformed the Soviet Union into a superpower during World War II.<sup>2</sup>

Recently, Stalinism has also been discussed as an independent "civilizational paradigm,"<sup>3</sup> which does not override the credo of totalitarianism discussed above, but at the same time "socializes" our modernist notions of dictatorships in general. In the case of Russia, it seems reasonable that a civilization that had been historically steeped in caesaropapism could have hardly given birth to anything else than an ideologically revised and more centralized and militarized "new edition" of that grand tradition. In our view, however, the above mentioned "civilizational paradigm" should be used for the entire period of the Soviet Russian communist one-party regime, where Stalinism was but an extreme variant of the standard totalitarian model.

2 Moreover, this trend seems to have made a comeback in the current Stalinist renaissance in Russia, where Putin's geostrategic ambitions suggest an equally serious claim to global prestige.

3 One of the representatives of this new, comprehensive approach is Steven Kotkin. See Kotkin, Stephen. 1997. *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization*. Oakland: University of California Press; see also Bartha, Eszter. 2003. "A sztálinizmus a régi és az új historiográfiában" ['Stalinism in Old and New Historiographies']. In Krausz, Tamás (ed.) *A sztálinizmus hétköznapijai* ['Everyday Life under Stalinism']. Budapest: Nemzeti Tankönyvkiadó, pp. 15–40.

The rise of Stalinism might seem historically predictable on Russian soil, but what about the victims of the westward penetration of Stalinism after World War II? According to the *bon mot* of Polish poet Czesław Miłosz, "Stalinism was not simply forced onto Central Eastern European societies, but built up from within," but what does that mean for historians who are trying to reconstruct the Stalinist and post-Stalinist history of the satellite states lying west of the Soviet Union's borders? The starting point, of course, is timeliness, or the way these states were "introduced" to the Soviet system and the Stalinist model, which then raises the issue of the distinction to be made between the general term *Sovietization*, and the more specific term *Stalinization*, because following World War II, the western states of the Soviet Bloc were forced to adapt the relevant or Stalinist version of the Sovietization process.

With regard to the Stalinization of the Central Eastern European satellite states, we cannot ignore the different historical and civilizational circumstances of these states at the time of the Soviet penetration, including their different postwar international legal statuses resulting from their participation in World War II – in other words, their varying potential for sovereignty on account of being victors, losers, or by-victors and by-losers of the war. Compared to our previous politological modeling, these characteristics presented a kaleidoscopic diversity, the exact sort of potential satellite pluralism that the "Pax Sovietica" and the Stalinization process were adamant to squeeze into a singular Stalinist mold. (Or, as regional urban slang has it, "the by-victorious Czechs and Poles received as their reward what the by-losing Hungarians and Romanians received as punishment.") It is important to note that from the perspective of the bourgeoisisation and urbanization of prominent Central Eastern European centers (as opposed to the neglected periphery), the Stalinization process meant a form of regression – the "refeudalization" of certain civilized and somewhat modernized regions, if you will. Such states included Bohemia, the Sudetenland, the more industrialized regions of Poland and Hungary, and the artificially created East German state mutation known as the German Democratic Republic.

We have no pretensions or means of settling the age-old debate of Stalinism, where the ideological explanation goes that Stalin and his "ism" constituted a secularized "anti-Christ" compared to (malleable) Marxist-Leninist notions of atheistic socialism and communism, which is what had theoretically led to the excommunication of Stalinism. However, more practical approaches suggest that on account of the (Russian) circumstances of the implementation of the grand communist project, Stalinism turned out to be an extreme but nonetheless "source coded" derivation of Bolshevism in power. To put it differently, Stalin's institutionalized state terror was an immanent part of the system turned rampant, which was to be neutralized by the politically ambitious De-Stalinization process and its technical adjustments to power and control. This version does seem to be closer to a historical approach of Stalinism, but its realization is no less controversial than the theoretical discourse that surrounds it. However, we might be able to move forward by considering those Stalinist mechanisms of power that have been confirmed as deviations from the previously mentioned systemic characteristics of totalitarianism.

The satellite states that were forced to adopt the Stalinist model and eventually produced their own "nationally tinted" versions of it also raise interesting questions. Even if we were to accept the Soviet Russian melting pot as an autochthonous civilizational paradigm, would this also hold true for the second generation of "aftermarket" satellite states, or should the latter be considered a case of "the rockiest road (or roads) leading from capitalism and back again?" In other words, the question is whether we consider the different satellite state versions of the Stalinist model to be political "excursions" – not necessarily integral or constrained, mind you –, which ultimately became part of the various national histories.

Following Stalin's death, the revival of the proposition of a "collective leadership" is usually traced back to the idea that none of the potential successors had the personal power or prestige once commanded by Stalin, so the "logic" of the war of succession – supposing it had been driven by logic – dictated the division of the competencies of power. Still, such a division of competencies did not

reach beyond the highest levels of executive power, or the relatively closed circle of former adjutants and heir candidates who lived to see the end of Stalin's reign one way or another. Nevertheless, we believe that this explanation, however plausible it seems, might be the easy way out, so to speak. From a retrospective (historical) perspective, it would be more accurate to talk of the developments in Moscow as the reorganization of Stalin's personal dictatorship into the dictatorship of a faux-collective Presidium, which at the time did not constitute the "softening" of the totalitarian regime into an authoritarian system, but the transformation of a rhapsodic personal dictatorship into a more delegated and operative Party dictatorship. In other words, compared to Stalin's former "manually operated" *dirigisme*, it was now a small group of people that had seized the licenses of omnipotence and omnicompetence, which entailed a certain expansion of governmental and administrative licenses, both on the federal and the republican levels. It is also important to add that by partially relieving the Party administration of its operative burdens and confining it to theoretical guidance only, Soviet leadership managed to somewhat shift responsibility away from "the Party" for the everyday deficiencies and fiascos generated by the system, while any and all positive results or "successes" could still be chalked up to the Party's own efforts.

We may well ask what characteristics made up the specifics of the Stalinist system, should we maintain the convention that the Soviet communist project had always been, and remained a totalitarian system before, during, and after Stalin's reign. Recording the most important of these criteria would also allow us to better understand the apparent diversity of the De-Stalinization procedures adopted by the various satellite states and provinces lying west of the Soviet Union, so let us attempt to trace the differences between Stalinism and De-Stalinization by way of a two-step model, where the starting point shall be a simplified "process diagram" that aims to capture the temporal modifications of Soviet totalitarianism. The first step is to produce a list of the "innovative elements" Stalinism had introduced into communist (Bolshevik) totalitarianism, which will then allow us to map the corresponding countermeasures of the De-Stalinization process. Hopefully the conclusions drawn from that diagram might

tell us whether or not the "historical" mathematical equation of injecting Stalinism into regular (Soviet, Bolshevik) communism and then subtracting those same characteristics might lead us back to the "original characteristics" of autochthonous communism. Let us begin, then, by discussing the extent to which Stalinism and its crapulent deregulation had modified the most important characteristics of totalitarianism.

(1) *A closed, exclusivist ideology.* After Stalin's dreams of global revolution had been shattered, this characteristic assumed the form of "communism in one country" xenophobia during his reign. Increased concentration on internal affairs then allowed it to mutate into Soviet national Bolshevism, with the added premise of the "escalation of class conflict." After World War II, Russia's "we are alone" psychosis was *ad acta* resolved by the westward penetration of Stalinism in Europe, and the rise of communism in China. Not only had the Soviet Union become a superpower, but it also managed to expand its empire with a host of western *Pufferstaats*. During the development of second-generation Stalinisms in these provinces, the idea of the exclusive governance of the "omnipotent" CPSU remained in effect, along with the idea of the escalation of class conflict. However, having taken a preference to the vision of "imperial internationalism," the Soviet Union began to launch a merciless attack on "small national" nationalisms in the western states, despite the fact that the local communist parties had been gaining greater social acceptance by donning a national façade. (This culminated in the excommunication of Tito, after which arguments about national specifics became a communist *anathema* altogether.) In the final years of Stalin's reign, "communism in one country" was replaced by "world communism" as an ideological agenda, and by the Cold War "peace camp" as a cohesive ideological state, the latter manifesting as a type of collective xenophobia.

(2) *A one-party system.* This characteristic remained constant throughout the communist project, with a few tangible modifications. In this case, the deviance or extremity of Stalinism manifested itself in the fact that the representatives of the various political trends encompassed by the Communist Party – and their lower level

followers – were just as mercilessly purged from the Party by way of execution, imprisonment, or internment to the gulags, as the enemy “apostates” had once been persecuted by witch hunts and inquisitions. (With regard to the subject, we need not discuss the handful of marginal “prop” parties that were only spared in certain states as symbolic *boutonnieres* of their political ensemble.) In this manner, the “one-party coalition” of previous courses and fractions within the Party was supplanted by a monolithic party rule. During and after the De-Stalinization process, this trend of “the revolution eating its own children” was somewhat suppressed, but never for long. Nevertheless, one of the long-term effects of De-Stalinization was the covert splintering of socialist state parties into different factions while the ban on factions was still in effect. In later decades of post-Stalinism, the one-party system was characterized by the coexistence and behind-the-scene struggles of Stalinist requisites and De-Stalinization trends, which dominated to different extents and at different periods in each communist state, though in terms of the one-party system and the personal concentration of power, Romania and Albania had remained the most faithful to Stalinist “tradition.”<sup>4</sup>

(3) *Central direction and control of the economy through state planning.* This practice was itself a Stalinist creation, but somewhat rationalized versions of it also survived after the De-Stalinization process, and remained part of the system until the collapse of the communist project. One general characteristic was the modernizing preferences of the one-party system turned into stubborn practice that consistently ignored the actual supply and demand on the market, first by rejecting reality altogether, and then by working against the grain with varying degrees of intensity. Consequently, post-Stalinist mutations were also characterized until the very end by the constant “reproduction of shortages.”<sup>5</sup> (In this respect, the De-Stalinization

4 The studies in this volume do not venture beyond the region between the European Iron Curtain and the Soviet Union, and therefore do not touch upon North Korea, or the vehemently autochthonous characteristics of China's Maoist communism.

5 Kornai, János. 2014. “A hiány újratermelése” [‘The Reproduction of Shortages’]. *Közgazdasági Szemle*, October 2014, pp. 1139–1157. See also Kornai, János.



process produced exceptional developments in Hungary, where from the 1960's onwards, a "secondary economy" was gradually and reluctantly integrated into the system of state planning.) In this economic system, external capitalist trade was always regarded as a "necessary evil" within global relations, which allowed the Soviet Bloc to acquire raw materials that were strategically vital even to state planning, and later to import the products of modern state-of-the-art technology and knowhow, although these were sometimes secured via the trafficking of COCOM-listed products, whether it was carried out by the state, or agents funded by the state.

(4) *A monopoly on culture and the means of communication.* This characteristic remained an integral part of public policy until the very end of the communist system. With the decline of Stalinism, certain fields of the cultural sphere were allowed to engage, on the one hand, in the carefully monitored dissemination of scientific, artistic, or educational information on the new phenomena and trends of the "other world beyond the Bloc" – and on the other, to produce publications and art that hinted at different avenues of thought, and so received volatile responses from the state. In the final decades, during the gradual collapse of the system, dissident voices received a "second publicity" in the form of *samizdat* publications or isolated non-conformist "cultural hubs," but with the exception of Poland, such initiatives remained marginal across the Soviet Bloc.

(5) *A secret police network infiltrating every social sphere of life.* In terms of organization and operation, this subsystem was the one most intransigently penetrated by Stalinism. Following Stalin's death, the De-Stalinization process found itself tackling a hundred-handed, Moscow-headed giant, while retrospectively uncovering the true nature of the Stalinist deviation within the Soviet system, which was to grant the secret police relative independence in pursuing the enemies of the state. Compared to this Stalinist drill, the post-

1980. *A hiány* ['Shortage']. Budapest: Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó; Kornai, János. 1992. *The Socialist System: The Political Economy of Communism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (Hungarian version: Kornai, János. 1993. *A szocialista rendszer. Kritikai politikai gazdaságtan* ['The Socialist System: Critical Political Economics']. Budapest: Heti Világgazdaság Kiadói Rt.)

Stalinist one-party system deemed it necessary to “reclaim” its high level competencies from, and reestablish its control over these bodies – in other words, to bridle the secret services that had been “cruising on autopilot” (a tendency formerly known as Berianism, or Chekist avant-gardism). Following the Soviet acquisition of nuclear secrets during the war, and the confiscation of German rocket technology as bounty, two more decades had to pass before the second half of the 1960's saw the rise of economic and technological espionage alongside traditional political intelligence – mostly on account of the Soviet Union's hunger for state-of-the-art technology, discussed under Point (3) above. With the gradual expansion of scientific relations across the various political systems, the cooperation of the satellite states was indispensable in creating a lucrative “business” of high-tech reconnaissance. However, despite the relative differences across the various states, one of the most pervasive aspects of the secret services remained that they dedicated at least as many resources to monitoring their own “local” operative servants as they did to external (military and civilian) intelligence and counterintelligence.

Having discussed the five major tenets of totalitarianism, we have arrived at the core subject of this volume, which grants a glimpse into the metamorphosis of the secret services of the various Central Eastern European satellite states after Stalin's death.<sup>6</sup> While each study touches upon the low-key corrective measures leveled at the Party and state leadership apparatuses of their respective countries, they largely focus on the unfolding process of the reorganization(s) of the secret services, and the reprogramming of their “positions of power” within the system. With regard to the general situation of the satellite states towards the end of Stalinism, studies dedicated to the contemporary German Democratic Republic, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Bulgaria and Hungary show a strong convergence on two major points. One was that the economy and all public services relying on redistribution

<sup>6</sup> The studies of this volume are the written versions of the presentations held at the following international conference: *Continuities – Discontinuities: Secret Services after Stalin's Death in Communist Central and Eastern Europe 1953–1960*. International Conference of the European Network of Official Authorities in Charge of the Secret Police Files. Sopron (Hungary), September 25, 2014.

were on the verge of collapsing;<sup>7</sup> and the other was their remarkably similar assessments of the reorganization of the secret services. To quote Jerguš Sivoš's study on Czechoslovakia, "in the previous period, the secret services gained too much power, even over the party itself." In Czechoslovakia and Hungary, this was resolved by reintegrating the once independent state security bodies into the Ministry of the Interior, while the GDR accomplished the same feat by demoting the former Ministry of State Security into a state secretariat, which was then absorbed by the Ministry of the Interior.

Paweł Sasanka's summary of the De-Stalinization process in Poland is a fitting assessment of the entire European satellite region: "the Party structures gained importance while the security apparatus lost its former power." In this part of the Bloc, all satellite states were unanimous in their efforts – sanctioned by the concurrent ambitions of the imperial center in Moscow – to rein in the state security bodies that had gained too much power in the course of adapting to the Stalinist model, and to submit these bodies to the control and supervision of

7 In the case of Hungary, even the members of the Kremlin Party Presidium agreed that the number one culprit in the catastrophic state of the country was Hungary's number one man, Mátyás Rákosi, First Secretary of the Hungarian Communist Party. In June 1953, during the negotiations held in Moscow, members of the Soviet Party leadership repeatedly and strongly criticized Rákosi for the state of the Hungarian army, which in the last two years had been boosted to megalomaniacal proportions within an already oversized military apparatus, and added that withdrawing the war economic resources required for this project was "what was [truly] ruining the country." The hypocrisy of these otherwise factually correct rebukes was somewhat mitigated by Khrushchev's idle remark that these demands had, in fact, originated from Moscow, but Khrushchev immediately proceeded to add that the Hungarian comrades had even overachieved these particular demands. For these reasons, Rákosi was dismissed from his position as Prime Minister; however, he was allowed to retain his position as First Secretary of the Communist Party, which had been an even greater safeguard of his omnipotence. See T. Varga, György. 1992. "Jegyzőkönyv a szovjet és a magyar párt- és állami vezetők tárgyalásairól (1953. június 13–16.)" ['Minutes of the Meeting of Soviet and Hungarian Party and State Leaders (June 13–16, 1953)']. *Múltunk*, 2–3 (1992), pp. 234–269. See also Gyarmati, György. 2011. *A Rákosi-korszak. Rendszerváltó fordulatok évtizede Magyarországon, 1945–1956* ['The Rákosi Era: A Decade of Regime-Changing Turns in Hungary, 1945–1956']. Budapest: ÁBTL–Rubicon, pp. 279–343.

the upper echelons of Communist Party leadership. Of course, the realization and enforcement of De-Stalinization efforts varied across the different satellite states. In Hungary, for instance, beyond the necessity to curb Mátyás Rákosi's war economic preferences, Party leadership also initiated the legal review of former Stalinist political trials, and filtered the leadership of the state security services. In contrast, Milan Bárta concluded that in the case of Czechoslovakia, the "cautious De-Stalinization" confined to economic policy "finished before it actually started." Meanwhile, in East Germany, one of the consequences of the Berlin uprising in June 1953 was that in 1954, the secret services doubled the number of non-official informants (*unofizielle Mitarbaiter*), and the same was true for Hungary, where this contingent was significantly boosted to "counterbalance" the sudden cessation of mass internments and relocations.

At this point, we have gathered a sufficient number of factors to attempt a systematic overview of the political ambitions of the De-Stalinization process, with the initial politological "modeling" of totalitarianism as our starting point. Before we begin, it is important to note that the key terms used below offer a simplified, didactic version of the general characteristics of post-Stalinism.

#### A Simplified Overview of Stalinism vs. De-Stalinization

Stalinism	De-Stalinization
Megalomaniacal large scale investments in heavy industrial and war industrial projects, and the development of the army	Slight increase in the production of light industrial and consumer products
Forced collectivization of agriculture	The (temporal) toleration of privately operated agricultural farms
Exclusive one-party omnipotence in the organization and operation of the economy and society	Party omnipotence sustained, but coupled with "division of labor" of the various state administrative competencies
Cult of personality	"Collective leadership"

# A FOREWORD BY THE EDITORS

The <i>sub rosa</i> struggle of Party forums and state security bodies for the actual control of the dictatorship	Regulation and restriction of state security bodies, submission of these bodies to dominant Party leadership
Integrated and institutionalized state-controlled terror against "non grata" social groups	The virtual restoration of "socialist legality," realized only partially and within a restricted circle
Isolation between Cold War "camps," with occasional, moderate confrontations (closing)	Attempts at the diplomatic mitigation of the most severe inter-camp and inter-Bloc confrontations (opening)
The outward appearance of a monolithic unity exhibited by the Stalinist <i>Ostblock</i>	Increasingly "pluralized" variants of the Soviet model within the system of the post-Stalinist <i>Ostblock</i>
During the Cold War, the world order was shaped by these successive processes. <sup>8</sup>	

It is no coincidence that the scheme contains only simplified terms and keywords, as the changes outlined above are difficult to trace in the sporadic diversity of "so many countries, so many variants."

With regard to the focus of the volume, let us look at some examples of the De-Stalinization of the Central Eastern European secret services. In Hungary, at the beginning of 1953, Mátyás Rákosi ordered the arrest of Gábor Péter, the faithful and servile head of the State Security Authority, who was to be tried in a "classic" political show trial reminiscent of the early years of the dictatorship. However, instead of using the originally planned "Zionist conspiracy" charges, communist leadership ultimately used a modified, De-Stalinization

<sup>8</sup> One (!) comprehensive interpretation of the resulting global situation can be found in Kissinger, Henry. 2014. *World Order*. New York: The Penguin Press. For the Hungarian translation of the book, see *Az amerikai idealizmus realitása. Henry Kissinger: Világrend* ['The Reality of American Idealism: Henry Kissinger's *World Order*'], translated by Tibor Kállai and Éva Pataky. Budapest: Antall József Tudásközpont, 2015.

compliant script to sentence Péter to lifelong imprisonment,<sup>9</sup> and then proceeded to defenestrate a number of high-ranking state security officials. (See the article by György Gyarmati and Mária Palasik). Meanwhile, according to Jerguš Sivoš, no personnel changes occurred in Czechoslovakia in 1953, where communist subjects were still being oppressed by the same state security apparatus that had risen to power during the establishment of the one-party system. Further away in East Germany, Party leadership did dismiss the Chief of the Stasi, Wilhelm Zaisser, whose Stalinist zeal had ruffled many feathers even within the circles of the Communist Party elite, but this was accomplished without any criminal procedures or political trials, despite the fact that Zaisser had been stigmatized as an accomplice of Beria after the latter's downfall in Moscow. At the same time, Roger Engelmann mentions another exquisite example of the struggles of East German De-Stalinization: the East Berlin reception of the changes within Polish Party leadership in 1956. In spring of 1956, when after seven years of obscurity and imprisonment, Władysław Gomułka was once more appointed as First Secretary of the Polish United Workers' Party, authorities in the East German capital simply confiscated all copies of the daily newspaper that attempted to inform the public, to delay the news for as long as possible. This was due to the fact that German communist politician Walter Ulbricht reacted to the events in Warsaw with nothing short of outrage, arguing that "the Polish State Security should have prevented Gomułka from coming to power." Ulbricht even held a grudge against the messenger, new Stasi Chief Ernst Wollweber, for his inability to persuade his Polish comrades to take action.

<sup>9</sup> Although this volume contains no studies dedicated to Romania, it is interesting to note that one of the unique aspects of the Romanian purges was that unlike the other satellite states, the Romanian apparatus even targeted leading *Muscovite* communists, such as Ana Pauker, or Vasile Luca, who received a life sentence in 1954. See Bottoni, Stefano. 2014. *A várva várt Nyugat. Kelet-Európa története, 1944-től napjainkig* ['The Long Awaited West: The History of Eastern Europe from 1944 to the Present']. Budapest: MTA BTK TTI, pp. 77–118. His study has since been published in English. See Bottoni, Stefano. 2017. *Long Awaited West. Eastern Europe since 1944*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Let us now suspend our current discussion of the local diversity of the De-Stalinization processes, or the many concrete examples of Stalinist rearguard action, and pass that baton to the case studies of this volume, which all confirm that following Stalin's death, the second-hand dictatorships of the European *Ostblock* did by no means follow the same algorithm in keeping up with the developments in the Soviet Union. In this regard, the studies reveal a less conspicuous phenomenon, which was that the formerly outwardly monolithic uniformity of the Stalinist satellite dictatorships had practically pluralized via the adoption of "unique national characteristics." The states of course varied in their metamorphosis according to the extent to which historical and social traditions were foregrounded, and whether their loyalty was to their traditional national character or to the reign of terror reminiscent of the Stalinist period, but each and every state began to (also) assume its own distinct character. In other words, with time, and especially from the 1960's onwards, the different variants of the Soviet (Stalinist) model, which had initially exposed the diversity within the communist global system, began to transform into a political patchwork of different shades of unique "national communisms." Following these developments, the satellite states of the *Ostblock* were anchored more by the Warsaw Pact and the nuclear military superpower represented by Moscow than by the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, and sucking on the shared teat of Communism had lost its allure altogether once the formerly compelling program ideology shriveled into a mere status quo ideology. In fact, by the final decades of the crumbling communist system, each and every satellite state was at pains to expand their contacts with the "enemy" capitalist countries of the West.

To conclude our theoretical discussion of Stalinism and totalitarianism, let us briefly review the history of the post-war Stalinist red zone delineated by the Curzon Line, the eastern chunk of the Carpathian Mountains, and the Iron Curtain dividing Europe. After the initial forced cohesion of Stalinism, centrifugal tendencies began to rear their heads in the border regions of the Soviet empire, where De-Stalinization inevitably initiated a revision of the political system of communism, even if the extent of this revision varied

across the different satellite states. Post-Stalinism, in all its diverse and contradictory consequences, was a metamorphosis inspired by the Kremlin, since even Moscow had to concede that the Stalinist model of institutionalized Party and state terror was simply not sustainable in the long run. Basically, the price the Soviet Union paid for keeping its freshly acquired "external empire" was the emergence of a nationally tinted satellite conglomerate, granted that local leaders acknowledged Moscow's word as absolute, and guaranteed (in theory and practice) the exclusive rule of the Communist Party within their own spheres of influence. In this sense, Stalinism was technically just a phase, a temporarily existing variant within Soviet-type communist totalitarianism, so we could hardly call it a "civilizational paradigm." The latter would be more fitting – though not necessarily accurate – of the entire Soviet Russian communist project (1917–1991), within which the Stalinist period was "the most terrifying summer of adolescence." One of the legacies of this deviant period was a form of post-traumatic stress syndrome that manifested itself in selective amnesia and selective memory, both in state policy and practice, and in social response, though the severity of these symptoms varied from state to state.<sup>10</sup> Because of that, after Stalin's death, Soviet leadership ended up ushering in a new era of communism in the spirit of the Hegelian *Aufhebung*, where the result was a series of political mutations that began to assume varying degrees of national character.<sup>11</sup> In this light, it was only a matter of time before the Muscovite shepherd lost control over the flock that had begun to stray away from the slowly eroding corral of "world communism."

<sup>10</sup> This still prevalent post-traumatic stress syndrome is further explored by Belarusian journalist and literary Nobel Prize winner Svetlana Alexievich. See Alekszjevics, Svetlana. 2016. *Elhordott múltjaink. "A szocializmus még itt van mindannyiunkban..."* ['Our Worn Past: "Socialism still lives on in all of us..."] Budapest: Európa Könyvkiadó.

<sup>11</sup> For the Hungarian version of post-Stalinism, see Rainer M., János. 2011. *Bevezetés a kádárizmusba* ['An Introduction to Kádárism']. Budapest: 1956-os Intézet–L'Harmattan Kiadó; see also the second half of the following monograph: Gyarmati, György and Waluch, Tibor. 2009. *Hungary under Soviet Domination 1944–1989*. New York: Columbia University Press.



## A FOREWORD BY THE EDITORS

Having drawn our conclusions, we of course acknowledge that we might have arrived at a vastly different interpretation of post-Stalinism, had we approached the subject from the perspective of *la longue durée* advocated by the Annales school of historiography. At the same time, to the generations that managed to survive the communist reign of the twentieth century, the idea that “time heals all wounds,” and the “historical perspective” it requires might still be out of reach, despite the fact that on a historical scale, the project of communism – and Stalinism – has proven to be an ephemeral phenomenon. Let us all hope it stays that way...

*György Gyarmati – Mária Palasik*

Budapest, September 2017.

*Translated by Éva Misits*



## Hectic De-Stalinization and the Secret Services in Hungary, 1953-1956

By the beginning of 1953, Hungary was in such a catastrophic state due to the forcefully implemented Stalinist dictatorship of Mátyás Rákosi that Soviet party leadership could no longer ignore his reign of terror, and following the death of Joseph Stalin, Soviet party presidency ordered the Hungarian communist leaders to Moscow in June 1953, where Rákosi and his brand of politics were subjected to relentless criticism. Rákosi was not only the leader of the Hungarian Workers' Party, but had been Prime Minister of Hungary since 1952, and though he was allowed to retain his position as the leader of the party, formerly removed politician Imre Nagy was appointed as the new Prime Minister of Hungary and promised relative freedom in Hungarian internal affairs. With regard to our current topic, it is important to consider the following statement by Soviet Minister of the Interior Lavrentiy Beria at the meeting in Moscow: "It is also wrong that within three years, one and a half million (people) faced criminal procedures. This goes to show that the Ministry of the Interior, the State Security Authority, and the Ministry of Justice are doing a bad job, all of them are just doing whatever they want. The Ministry of the Interior must be merged with the State Security Authority with a prestigious leader to manage its affairs."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Beria's data regarding one and a half million Hungarian citizens facing criminal procedures likely included "police courts", which formed part of Hungarian public administrative procedures at the time. Available Hungarian sources do confirm

On the second day of the Moscow meeting between Hungarian and Soviet party leadership, Beria proceeded to add to the above quoted concerns that the reasons for the prospective merger of the State Security Authority and the Ministry of the Interior had to be stated in the meeting records to be revealed to the Hungarian public: "Comrade Rákosi wrongfully interfered in the affairs of the Ministry of the Interior and the State Security Authority in ways that must be discussed. (He issued orders for investigations, arrests, interrogation and torture of arrested persons, etc.) If we don't write this down, Comrade Rákosi might repeat his mistakes."<sup>2</sup>

Beria also suggested Ernő Gerő as the new Minister of the Interior,<sup>3</sup> a Hungarian communist politician who had spent the longest time in emigration in Moscow between the World Wars, and was therefore reasonably looked up to by other communists upon his return to Hungary in 1945 as the most initiated "homo sovieticus" within their ranks.

that victims of repression amounted to at least one million persons, or roughly fifteen percent of the adult population of Hungary. See Palasik, Mária. 1989. "Láttelet a magyar függetlenségről. Egy résztvevő feljegyzései az 1953-as moszkvai tárgyalásokról" ['An Analysis of Hungarian Independence: A Participant's Notes on the 1953 Moscow Meeting']. *Kapu*, May 5, 1989, pp. 4–10. (When we first published the notes before the Hungarian regime change, the official meeting minutes had not yet been found, which made these notes a rare and valuable find. However, Rudolf Földvári, the author of the notes, was reluctant to disclose his name along with the notes at that time – M. P.) For more details, see T. Varga, György. 1992. "Jegyzőkönyv a szovjet és a magyar párt- és állami vezetők tárgyalásairól (1953. június 13–16.)" ['Minutes of the Meeting of Soviet and Hungarian Party and State Leaders (June 13–16, 1953)']. *Múltunk*, 2–3 (1992), pp. 234–269.

2 Palasik 1989, op. cit., p. 8.

3 However, Beria also stated in agreement with Moscow Prime Minister G. Malenkov that while "previously our relationship mostly consisted of celebratory meetings and applause, (...) we would enforce a different type of relationship in the future (that) is completely different, (...) will be more responsible and more serious than it was in the past." Source: "L. Berija és G. Malenkov észrevételei. Jegyzőkönyv a Kremlben 1953. június 16-án tartott szovjet-magyar tanácskozásról" ['Notes of L. Beria and G. Malenkov: Minutes of the Soviet-Hungarian meeting in the Kremlin on June 16, 1953']. Hungarian National Archives (Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára, henceforth: MNL OL) M-KS 276. f. 102/65.

In July 1953, based on the initiatives of Soviet party leadership in Moscow, one of the decisions revealed in newly appointed Prime Minister Imre Nagy's government campaign was to downsize the State Security Authority and bring it under strict institutional control. Between 1950 and 1953, the State Security Authority operated as a quasi independent ministry, but on July 17, 1953, Decree 500/6/1953 of the new government abolished Regulation 4353/1949 of the Council of Ministers on the establishment of the State Security Authority, and issued a decision to merge the State Security Authority with the Ministry of the Interior.<sup>4</sup> However, despite Beria's insistence, the decision and the merger were not revealed to the public. Instead, Ernő Gerő, the new Minister of the Interior designated by Soviet party leadership, began to implement a series of decisive and confidential measures to incorporate the State Security Authority into the organizational structure of the Ministry of the Interior.<sup>5</sup> The process was facilitated by the fact that the scope of the Ministry was simultaneously reduced, and its traditional duties of governing and supervising administration were relegated to the newly formed local and regional councils, allowing the Ministry of the Interior to function as a law enforcement body.

Ernő Gerő's task of bringing the State Security Authority under the control of the Ministry of the Interior was further facilitated by the fact that Gábor Péter, former leader of the State Security Authority, had been arrested in January 1953 at the order of Mátyás Rákosi himself. Although Péter was a dedicated member of the Hungarian Communist Party and his personal loyalty to Rákosi during his eight years in office was unquestionable, his downfall was partly due to knowing too much of Rákosi's transgressions and due to the fact that his character seemed like a perfect fit for an upcoming show trial inspired by Moscow's anti-Zionist campaign against "Jewish doctors." The Soviet campaign took place soon after the Slánský trial

<sup>4</sup> MNL OL XIX-A-83-a 87. d.

<sup>5</sup> For more details, see Baráth, Magdolna. 2010. "Az államvédelem az egységes Belügyminisztériumban" ['State Defense at the Unified Ministry of the Interior']. *Betekintő*, 3 (2010). Source: [http://www.betekinto.hu/2010\\_3\\_barath](http://www.betekinto.hu/2010_3_barath) (accessed on April 3, 2013).

in Prague and was promptly adapted to the Hungarian judicial stage between January and February 1953, and Péter and several dozens of State Security Authority cadres were either dismissed from their positions or arrested while some committed suicide for fear that they might be next.<sup>6</sup> The concept was deemed irrelevant following Stalin's death, but Péter remained in detention regardless, and after standing trial for misuse of economic resources, he was given a life sentence.<sup>7</sup> While the procedure did not follow the script entirely, it could still be considered a show trial inasmuch as the judicial sentences for Gábor Péter and his associates were not based on their unlawful operations, despite the fact that facing trial for their countless illegal actions and their reign of everyday terror would have theoretically fit the concept of the de-Stalinization process. However, to reveal the actions of Péter and his associates would have been to expose the *modus operandi* of the system as well as Rákosi's responsibility. Therefore, officials were careful throughout the entire confidential process to never raise the question of what prominent Hungarian Communist Party politicians had given orders for Gábor Péter to act as an active agent of terror. Nevertheless, just as Péter and his associates received their first and second degree judicial sentences at the turn of 1953 and 1954, the government was already in the middle of a booming propaganda campaign announcing the establishment of "constitutional socialism."

Gábor Péter was not the only "founding father" of the Political Police who disappeared from the leading ranks of Imre Nagy's new

6 Following Péter's arrest, State Defense Colonel László Juhász, head of the Examination Department of the State Security Authority, committed suicide (1923–1953). Juhász and Péter were very close and Péter considered Juhász his unofficial deputy; therefore, when Gábor Péter was arrested in January 1953 and a warrant was issued for László Juhász's arrest, Juhász murdered his mother and killed himself before the arrest could be made. Another example is Police Colonel József Száberszky (1904–1953), who was transferred in 1948 from the State Security Department to the Ministry of Finance, where he became head of the department. On January 15, 1953, due to his connection to the Gábor Péter case, a warrant was issued for Száberszky's arrest. However, an hour before the arrest, Száberszky committed suicide. See Kóvér, György. 2011. "Írott orális történelem" ['Written Oral History']. *Forrás*, 7–8 (2011), pp. 177–183.

7 ÁBTL 2.1. VI/1., VI/1-a., VI/1-b., VI/1-c., VI/1-d. és 2.1. VI/19., 19-a., 19-b.

government, and his place as head of the State Security Authority, now under the control of the Ministry of the Interior, was taken by State Security General László Piros, who was formerly Péter's deputy and the head of the State Security Authority's Border Guard. In fact, László Piros managed to retain his executive status during the reigns of both Lieutenant General Gábor Péter and Minister of the Interior Ernő Gerő. He may have also capitalized on the knowledge that Mátyás Rákosi remained the leader of the one-party state, as suggested by the fact that upon the appointment of Gerő as the new Deputy Prime Minister, Piros was allowed to succeed him in the summer of 1954 as the new Minister of the Interior (from July 6, 1954 to October 25, 1956) as a recognition of his merits and services. As Minister of the Interior, László Piros had decisive authority and quickly sought to promote the now decade-long institutional superiority of the State Security Authority both within the Ministry of the Interior and on a wider scale. His prestige as a minister steadily increased with his appointment at the beginning of 1955 as an alternate member of the Political Committee, the highest governing body of the Hungarian Workers' Party, and the same year, the motion of establishing an independent Ministry of State Security was subjected to discussion on the grounds that the tasks of the State Security Authority had multiplied due to their wide scope of activities. At that time, the highest ranking leaders rejected his motion, but by the beginning of 1956, Piros managed to prepare the field by the establishment of a separate "State Security College".<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> The fact that László Piros and his first general deputy, "civillian" Mihály Gábor were both members of these two bodies can be considered just as evident as the fact that the five members of the State Security College were high officials belonging to this same circle. In contrast, the College of the Ministry of the Interior only had two police members (not counting the two leaders of the Ministry) as opposed to six state security officials: Major General Tibor Pécze, superintendent of the Hungarian National Police, and Colonel Sándor Kopácsi, superintendent of the Budapest Police Department. Of their activities in 1956 as members of the body, see *A Belügyminisztérium Kollégiumának ülései, 1953–1956* ['Sessions of the College of the Ministry of the Interior, 1953–1956']. Volumes I–III. Compiled by Erzsébet Kajári, edited by György Gyarmati and Katalin S. Varga. Budapest: ÁBTL, 2001–2006 (henceforth: *BM Koll.*) *BM Koll.* volume III.

Upon his appointment as the new Minister of the Interior, László Piros sought to reinforce the position of the Secret Services in every possible way, and did so under circumstances that were steadily improving in the favor of the Political Police. As early as the reorganization of the Ministry of the Interior in 1953, the once "abolished but preserved" State Security Authority assumed hegemony in the organizational order of the Ministry. According to the December 1953 statistics produced by the Ministry itself under Ernő Gerő's rule, eighteen out of thirty central divisions were involved in state security matters, while two-thirds of the other twelve divisions not involved in state security were controlled by high-ranking state security officials.<sup>9</sup> In short, out of thirty divisions, twenty-five were controlled by state security officials, two were controlled by police officials, one by a correctional official,<sup>10</sup> and the remaining two divisions were headed by a firefighter and an air defense official, respectively. The position of the State Security Authority became even more powerful in the course of reorganizations and the dismissal of previous leaders, and by December 1955, twenty-two out of thirty-two divisions belonged to state security, with twenty-one governed by state security officials and the one remaining division headed by a correctional official. As for the remaining ten divisions, six were also controlled by state security officials and only two were headed by police officials, which meant that twenty-seven of thirty-two divisions were controlled by state security officials who were simply "more equal than others", to use an Orwellian phrase. By this time, the only divisions not under state security control were the headquarters of the National Police Office and the Budapest Police Office, the air defense command, the fire brigade, and the Dózsa Sports Association.

9 Divisions that were not involved in state security included the divisions of public safety, traffic regulation (under the National Police Office), the fire brigade, civil protection, air defense, divisions in charge of personnel, finances, administration and economic technologies, and the Dózsa Sports Association.

10 The correctional official was Rudolf Garasin, who returned from the Soviet Union in 1951 at the request of Hungarian party leadership, although he had been practically engaged with the organization of the Hungarian forced labor camp system since 1949.



After the merger of the State Security Authority with the Ministry of the Interior and the subsequent penetration of the latter by state security officials, the State Security Authority also began penetrating the ranks of the police, which were formerly functionally separate within the organizational order of the Ministry of the Interior. By the beginning of 1956, only four of the twenty regional police bodies of the Ministry of the Interior (the Central Division in Budapest and the divisions of the nineteen Hungarian counties) were controlled by police officials and the rest by low- and high-ranking state security officials. At that time, László Piros also issued a decision to remove leading police officials from the local internal bodies one administrative level below the main police bodies, and replacing them with state security officials. These changes happened within the span of a few months, and by June 1956, the Ministry of the Interior considered it good and desirable progress that out of one hundred and twenty district police divisions,<sup>11</sup> sixty-nine (fifty-seven percent) were controlled by State Security officials.<sup>12</sup> In other words, in stark contrast to the decision to begin the de-Stalinization process in 1953, the State Security Authority that was originally sentenced to tighter organizational control and subordinated to the Ministry of the Interior practically ended up taking control of the entire Ministry, which became a *ministry of state security* under the name and guise of the Ministry of the Interior.

The latent conquest of the State Security Authority over the Ministry of the Interior was partly influenced by political shifts within Soviet and Hungarian communist party leadership following Stalin's death, as a result of which the politics of the "New Course" headed by Prime Minister Imre Nagy (from June 4, 1953 until April 18, 1955) seemed to shift from the extremes of a hysterical reign of terror to a somewhat softened "rationalized dictatorship." Among

11 Between 1953 and 1956, what would later become the county police headquarters were called the county police departments of the Ministry of the Interior, and district police headquarters were called the district police divisions of the Ministry of the Interior, led by a head of department or a head of division, respectively.

12 The number of police officials acting as heads of district police divisions was fifty-one. *BM Koll.* volume III, p. 646.

other measures, the new government announced the beginning of "constitutional socialism" and reluctantly set out to reinvestigate some of the show trials behind closed doors. However, they only looked at the most blatant show trials and they also hesitated to reinvestigate the cases of workers' movement cadres, most of them communists and former social democrats. The cases of approximately twenty-five thousand people without beneficial ties to leadership were also completely left out of these inquiries, as though they had not fallen victim to the same hysterical tendency of seeking and finding enemies of the state in every corner of Hungary. The majority of such victims remained in prison, and those who had served their sentences and were subsequently released were not rehabilitated, leaving them to suffer the existential and legal disadvantages of former convicts.

At the beginning of the reign of the new Hungarian government headed by Prime Minister Imre Nagy, all internment and forced labor camps were abolished and several victims were given amnesty, which seemed to suggest a rapid and positive development in politics and improved public morale despite the fact that Imre Nagy's draft order was amended with several restrictive measures within the Political Committee by Minister of the Interior Ernő Gerő. As a result, people who had "only" been interned due to suspicions or slander were sentenced in the last few months of 1953, but according to the somewhat varied statistics of different summarizing reports, approximately forty-four to forty-seven thousand people were also released from prison, internment and forced labor camps, or forced habitations. Nevertheless, these former internees were not allowed to move back into their confiscated apartments, nor were they allowed to reclaim their lost assets or receive compensation thereof. In fact, leadership attempted to bar them from returning to Budapest, leaving those who had been interned from the capital to seek a new life in smaller settlements around Budapest.<sup>13</sup> In the meantime, while

13 Bank, Barbara, Gyarmati, György and Palasik, Mária. 2012. *"Állami titok:" Internáló- és kényszermunkatáborok Magyarországon, 1945–1953* ["State Secret: Internment and Forced Labor Camps in Hungary, 1945–1953"]. Budapest: ÁBTL–L'Harmattan, pp. 56–57.

police surveillance somewhat lessened among those who managed to escape the terror of the Secret Services, the majority of newly released internees were soon brought under police surveillance, which subsequently prompted leadership to pass a decision for the reinforcement of the operative network of secret service agents and informants.

From the above discussed takeover of the State Security Authority within the Ministry of the Interior, we may conclude that the declaration of "constitutional socialism" turned out to be a farce, and the practice of false convictions and show trials continued with the assistance of the newly established Prosecutor General, albeit at a slower pace and with less severe sentences, as we shall see from the following examples.

According to official accounts, at the beginning of October, 1953, a "riot" broke out in Tiszaöl during the liberation of the detention camp, where authorities held former German war prisoners who were "returned" by the Soviet Union to Hungary in 1950 and 1951, but whose families had been deported to different occupied zones of Germany, leaving them nowhere to be liberated on Hungarian soil. Consequently, the State Security Authority classified them as "fascists" and detained them while their Hungarian, Southern-Slavic and Greek counterparts were all released from the camp. After these German prisoners had served six to eight years of prison in the Soviet Union, they were forced into two and a half years of ++ in Hungary, and according to the previous official account (explanation) of the State Security Authority, there may not have been a riot, but the camp guards did open fire on the prisoners who demanded freedom in accordance with government decrees declaring the dissolution of forced labor camps. Seventeen prisoners were injured and there were five casualties, but two prisoners were sentenced to five and six years respectively for "inciting a riot." After the event, Minister of the Interior Ernő Gerő noted off the record at the session of the College of the Ministry of the Interior that "the Tiszaöl case (was) a mistake by the command and the political division."<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Ibidem, 43-46., also *BM. Koll.* I. p. 354.

Another case of false convictions happened in August 1952, when a group of mining engineers were arrested by the State Security Authority and accused of “organized activities of sabotage”, for which the State Security Authority sought to have them sentenced by court. However, since the State Security Authority failed to “produce” enough evidence within one and a half years, in March 1954, officials turned to the first deputy of Minister of the Interior Ernő Gerő, State Security General László Piros, as well as their own direct superior and Deputy Minister of the Interior, State Security Major General István Dékán. They basically complained that the State Security Authority would “look bad” if they released the prisoners who refused to acknowledge the false allegations, and their request was soon granted. After pressure from above and the assistance of the prosecution and jury, the defendants were sentenced to one and a half years to three and a half years of prison, solely to preserve the prestige of the political police.<sup>15</sup>

A third example of injustices is the case of social democrat Sándor Szalai, a professor of sociology who was arrested by the State Security Authority in 1950 and given a life sentence as a fifth degree defendant in the Árpád Szakasits trial. Due to the rehabilitation procedures initiated by Imre Nagy’s government, Szalai’s case was reluctantly reviewed by Hungarian authorities;<sup>16</sup> however, the intention to have him sentenced in a show trial did not change. During his interrogation in 1954, his interrogator, First Lieutenant of State Security Miklós Farkas attempted to indict him with the same false accusations that led to his arrest four years prior, and used the same confessions Szalai

15 In 1957, the Presidential Council ruled the majority of verdicts null and void. See Cserényi-Zsitnyáni, Ildikó. 2013. *Kibányászott "lignitbűnök". A Rákosi-korszak egy bányamérnökperének anatómiája* [‘Mining for the “Coals of Crime:” The Anatomy of a Mining Engineer Trial from the Rákosi Era’]. Budapest: ÁBTL–L’Harmattan.

16 See Gál, Éva. 2013. “‘Lejáratás’ és ‘bomlasztás’ – A Kádár-kori államvédelem esete Szalai Sándorral. 1. rész” [“‘Degradation’ and ‘Disruption’: The Case of Kádarian State Defense and Sándor Szalai, Part 1’]. In Gál, Éva: *Lejáratás és bomlasztás. Tudósok, tanárok a titkosrendőrség látókörében* [‘Degradation and Disruption: Scholars and Teachers in the View of the Political Police’]. Budapest: Corvina-Nagy Imre Alapítvány, p. 187.

was tortured to make four years ago as evidence. According to the orders of the interrogation plan for October 27, 1954, "expose Sándor Szalai as a spy who sent documents to the Americans."<sup>17</sup> One and a half years passed for the Examination Department of the Ministry of the Interior to admit that "In the case of Sándor Szalai, there is no proof of espionage and illegal organization", and that he only confessed four years ago when "he was subjected to severe physical torture." Based on the disclosure of the department, Szalai's case was resubmitted for trial,<sup>18</sup> and his prison sentence concluded at the very end of March 1956 when he declared that "I have no claims or requests towards the Ministry of the Interior."<sup>19</sup>

The fourth and final example of injustices committed by Hungarian authorities is the case of Anna Kéthly, who had considerable prestige among the ranks of contemporary European left-wing politicians. She was arrested in 1950 during the prosecution of "treacherous social democrats", but unlike others, she was detained for three and a half years without indictment or a sentence. Authorities were careful not to release her during the amnesties of 1953 as well, until she could be finally sentenced for life in January 1954 by one of the courts sworn to uphold constitutional socialism. She was indicted for "initiation and orchestration of organization to overthrow the people's republic, and continuous espionage as a functionary for a foreign organization", while her prosecutors and their political superiors were on the brink of considering the revision of such and similar injustices, or at the very least the possible methods of deferring the issue. Kéthly was finally released in November 1954 after pressure from London and Moscow (!), and after four years of assassination of her character, she received "individual amnesty" for crimes she did not commit.<sup>20</sup>

17 ÁBTL 3.1.9. V-143389. 15.

18 Gál op. cit., p. 188.

19 ÁBTL 3.1.9. V-143389. 197.

20 Kádár, Zsuzsanna. 2012. *Elrabolt remények. A magyar szociáldemokrácia a párt felszámolása után* ['Stolen Hopes: Hungarian Social Democracy After the Dissolution of the Party']. Budapest: Napvilág Kiadó, pp. 108–111.

As the new Hungarian government continued to implement its half-hearted alleviatory measures, ruling party leadership and the apparatus of the Secret Services were united in their common authorial and social interests to escape public exposure and to face as few consequences as possible for the injustices committed during their reign of institutionalized terror. Indeed it was difficult, if not impossible to reinvestigate the most blatant injustices of the regime without reference to the responsibility of compromised persons, which only fueled the conflict between Imre Nagy and Mátyás Rákosi beyond their differences over the desirable avenues of communist party politics. It would seem that Ernő Gerő had also joined Mátyás Rákosi and the ranks of those carefully preserving and subtly implementing Stalinist politics when he realized that the reinvestigation of injustices would “threaten the survival of the core party leadership in its current form”, including his own high status since he had become Deputy Prime Minister to latently undermine the policies of Prime Minister Imre Nagy. From that moment onward, Gerő became an important ally in the struggle to eliminate Imre Nagy, especially after the October 1954 session of the Central Committee of the Hungarian Workers’ Party, where the addition of new members seemed to work in favor of the “New Course” of Imre Nagy, only for their cause to be sabotaged by Rákosi and associates, who “forgot” to pass the directives issued at the conference of the party.

After 1953, the new leading officials and lower-ranking officers of the State Security Authority became persons who managed to survive the political cleansing after Gábor Péter’s arrest despite the “witch hunt among the cadres”, to use the phrase of a contemporary party activist,<sup>21</sup> and these new state defense troops acquired their qualifications through crash courses provided by the communist party education system. The results were undeniably poor even by the standards of leading bodies, whose documents state that the

21 MNL OL M-KS 276. f. 65/51. Letter from Elemér Balogh, teacher of the Party College of the Hungarian Workers’ Party to Mátyás Rákosi in July 1954. Quoted in Gyarmati, György. 2011. *A Rákosi-korszak. Rendszerváltó fordulatok évtizede Magyarországon, 1945–1956* [‘The Rákosi Era: A Decade of Regime-Changing Turns in Hungary, 1945–1956’]. Budapest: ÁBTL–Rubicon, p. 278.

level of education and preparedness of the "second generation" was considerably below even that of the officials and lower ranking officers under Gábor Péter's reign. The majority of preserved contemporary orders, instructions and reports also support this fact as their rudimentary texts are on par with the ideological jargon of basic party seminars, and their content is largely vague and incomprehensible, partly due to a baffling lack of grammar skills. All that could be deciphered of these documents was that the State Security Authority did its best to adhere to the constantly changing guidelines of equally volatile political trends.

In the first year of the reign of the new Hungarian government, there was a slight departure from the cruelties committed under Gábor Péter as shown by the use of euphemisms such as abandoning the "avant-gardism" [sic] of previous practices, condemning the State Security Authority for "the general practice of gross violations of constitutionality, the widespread harassment of the working masses and authoritarianism", and stating that in order to bring about any change, the Secret Services will (also) "have to get accustomed to democratism."<sup>22</sup> However, immediately following the approval of the new political agenda at the end of 1954 by Soviet party leadership in Moscow, Minister of the Interior László Piros and the State Security Authority under his control not only assisted in the elimination of Imre Nagy, but also offered their full support to Mátyás Rákosi upon his return into power. At the January 25, 1955 session of the Political Committee of the Hungarian Workers' Party, a decision based on a report of political screenings within the Ministry of the Interior was passed only after the insertion of an extra paragraph, according to which "we must relentlessly struggle against and eliminate all views that consider the State Security Authority as independent from the Party," which is striking in light of the fact that the original submission contained no such suggestions.<sup>23</sup> Imre Nagy himself was present at

<sup>22</sup> MNL OL M-KS 53/172. Report of Minister of the Interior Ernő Gergő to the Political Committee of the Hungarian Workers' Party on April 7, 1954, of his experiences of the reorganization of the Ministry of the Interior.

<sup>23</sup> MNL OL M-KS 276. f. 53/216.

this session for the last time as a member of the Political Committee,<sup>24</sup> where the amendment of the decision seemed to be an omen of the alarming change in the Hungarian political agendas for more than just himself. The reinforced "party service bill" then trickled down the organizational hierarchy of the Secret Services a few weeks later in March 1955, when László Piros made a statement to his underlings at the party conference of the Ministry of the Interior that "we were not consistent enough or brave enough, our class-struggle spirit and our communist Checkist vigilance faded, and our work was often characterized by hesitation and liberalism." In this manner, Piros' speech served not only as organizational self-criticism but also as a pledge of the State Security Authority's renewed loyalty to Rákosi's political agenda.<sup>25</sup> Soon after in January 1955, Imre Nagy had suffered severe illness and during his absence, the April 14, 1955 session of the Central Committee passed a decision to eliminate him from the Political Committee and dismiss him from his position as president of the Council of Ministers.<sup>26</sup>

Minister of the Interior László Piros' decision to join the ranks of Rákosi's re-Stalinization politics was facilitated by the fact that the dismissal of Imre Nagy and the resulting regime change promised welcome adjustments for his political career, as evidenced by the fact that he only focused on one half of the new "Khrushchevian" Soviet secret service doctrines he was supposed to adapt into Hungarian practice.

Following the removal of Soviet Minister of State Security Lavrentiy Beria in the summer of 1953, Ivan Serov, a former Ukranian communist party ally and a favorite of Khrushchev was appointed

24 Until October 23, 1956, and the beginning of his second term as Prime Minister.

25 Opening speech of Minister of the Interior László Piros at the Party Conference of the Ministry of the Interior on March 18, 1955. Quoted in Kajári, *Erzsébet*. "Bevezető a Belügyminisztérium Kollégiuma 1953–1956 közötti iratainak tanulmányozásához" ['Introduction to the Analysis of Documents Produced by the College of the Ministry of the Interior Between 1953 and 1956']. In *BM Koll.* volume I, p. 38.

26 In December 1955, Imre Nagy was even excluded from the Hungarian Workers' Party.



as the new leader of the reorganized Soviet Secret Services and in March 1955, now as president of the KGB, General Serov invited the corresponding leaders of the satellite states to Moscow in order to discuss the tasks of the new Soviet political agenda within their respective administrative fields.<sup>27</sup> The modified secret service regimes had taken into account the slow amelioration of the international political situation and the foreign affairs initiatives of the Soviet Union, and basically shifted the focus of intelligence and counterintelligence towards preventive measures and the detection of infiltrating agents. The proposal also entailed the development of operative networks and especially the development of operative technologies – in other words, to practice “reactive defense”, a rarely used term within the Hungarian Secret Services that was now given the utmost priority. For the few Hungarian initiators who knew of the modified secret service regime, these changes soon became associated with the new political agenda due to the fact that they were also declared desirable by the first Minister of the Interior of Imre Nagy’s new government, Ernő Gerő, who stated in his briefing in August 1953 that “operative work is much more suited to the character of our people’s democracy, and is also a cheaper and more appropriate method than police enforcement. We need preventive work first and foremost, not police enforcement.”<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, it was the vision of his Deputy Minister and consequent successor László Piros that prevailed in the end, as Piros managed to strengthen the ranks of the State Security Authority by three additional regiments in the course of the following year.

Regarding the new policies of the Moscow meeting of secret service leaders in March 1955, László Piros’s attention proved rather “selective” as he seemed to disregard the implementation of the doctrine of reactive defense except for the general idea that in the new political

27 Okváth, Imre. 2001. “Jelentés a szocialista országok állambiztonsági vezetőinek titkos moszkvai tárgyalásairól, 1955. március 7–12.” [‘Report on the Secret Moscow Meeting of the State Security Leaders of Socialist Countries, March 7–12, 1955’]. *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények*, 4 (2001), pp. 689–706.

28 See *BM Koll.* volume I, p. 104, as well as Bánkúti, Gábor. 2011. *Jezsuiták a diktatúrában* [‘Jesuits in the Dictatorship’]. Budapest: L’Harmattan–JTMRT–ÁBTL, pp. 134–135.

milieu, improving the efficiency of state protection work would mean a greater workload for the State Security Authority. Accordingly, in his report to the Political Committee of the Hungarian Workers' Party upon his return from Moscow, he suggested the establishment of an independent Ministry of State Security.<sup>29</sup> Though his motion was rejected by the party leadership, we need to take into account that among other things, the "new political situation" was interpreted differently in Moscow and differently again in Budapest, where the first item on the agenda was the abolishment of all measures and progress fostered by Prime Minister Imre Nagy and his government. To this end, an iron-fisted politics of "increased vigilance" seemed more to the purpose than the subtle handling of "the core centers of political reactionaries", and the institutional base for the former could be supplied by no other than the Ministry of the Interior led by László Piros and loyal to Mátyás Rákosi.

As a consequence of the above mentioned political processes, by the fall of 1956, the *State Security Authority had become a generally recognized public enemy* due to the fact that it was viewed as such not only by the oppressed masses, but also a portion of the oppressors themselves as the hysterical secrecy that characterized the entire system and especially the operation of the Secret Services eventually backfired due to a complete lack of public disclosure. Confidentiality had always been an integral part of the operation of the Secret Services, and although the majority of show trials and judicial murders could have been blamed on "Gábor Péter and his gang", their elimination took place behind the scenes in strict secrecy, and the same principle applied for rehabilitations, which were considered part of the "internal affairs" of the party. As a result, the wider Hungarian public had no way of knowing or reason to suspect that any real change had taken place in the operational or legal continuity of the Secret Services. There was no announcement of the merger of the State Security Authority with the Ministry of the Interior in 1953, nor did the public see any traces of the structural changes and the various purges of internal ranks. For millions of nameless political victims, the State Security Authority

<sup>29</sup> Okvát "Jelentés", op. cit., p. 696.

thus remained the most prominent pillar of the system and the most direct manifestation of the communist dictatorship in the lives of the Hungarian masses. There were no perceivable changes in the personnel, operation or methods of the State Security Authority after 1953 as far as Hungarian society was concerned, since the institution even retained its former rank structure and Soviet-inspired uniforms. The situation was also compounded by the fact that pre-1953 injustices seemed at least partly and non-officially disclosable by 1956.

The above mentioned factors eventually culminated in the Hungarian Revolution of October 1956, during which the number one public enemy became the State Security Authority, which incited greater hatred and thirst for revenge than the entire communist party leadership. How and in what ways the system was to be transformed remained unclear, but the revolution demanded unanimously to the very end that the State Security Authority be abolished and disbanded.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> The public and social atmosphere is well described by a contemporary, István Bibó: "Can a government that considers itself a proletarian dictatorship exist without the State Security Department? Because Imre Nagy also found himself in a situation where he had to either confront the fundamental problem of the proletarian dictatorship or rely on the State Security Department. I don't think there's an in-between. And if he ends up not wanting to rely on the State Security Department, then I'm all for everything good." In *Bibó István interjúk* ['Interviews with István Bibó']. DVD compiled by Gábor Hanák et al. Budapest: OSZK Történelmi Interjúk Társaság Magyar Mozgókép Megismertetéséért Alapítvány, 2011. Bibó only accepted the post of State Minister after Imre Nagy made his declaration as Prime Minister to abolish the State Security Authority. However, János Kádár and his restoration government chose to "co-opt" the State Security Authority, keeping the body by his side as the number one guardian of the regime even in the decades of consolidation, until the fall of the political system. It seems that in these circumstances, Bibó chose to acknowledge these decisions as a law-abiding citizen, but took great care never to affiliate with the Kádarian regime. See Gyarmati, György. 2013. "Szabadlábakon fogságban. Adalékok Bibó István 1963 utáni éveihez" ['Free in Captivity: Supplements to Bibó István's Life after 1963']. *Tolle Lege*, III/1 (January 2013), p. 19. Source: <http://tollelege.elte.hu> accessed on June 26, 2013.

In conclusion, let us place the above summary of the situation of the Secret Services into the wider context of Hungarian de-Stalinization processes after the death of Stalin, taking into account the fact that on the international stage, Hungary was the smallest entity in the Western buffer zone of the Soviet Union and played a minor role in terms of resources and its geostrategic location. The logic of accountability would have dictated that Mátyás Rákosi's five-year reign of terror and the resulting list of political mistakes and "criminal records" he was condemned for by Soviet party leadership would have been more than enough to doom Rákosi as Lavrentiy Beria's actions had doomed him. However, the difference between the two was that Beria was actually feared by Soviet party leadership and had to be rapidly eliminated by general fear-driven consensus whereas old and feeble Rákosi excited no such concerns and remained a marginal character due to the relative unimportance of Hungary on a grander scale.<sup>31</sup> In fact, allowing Rákosi to retain his position as the leader of the Hungarian Workers' Party was part of the checks implemented by the post-Stalinist "Big Brother" in Moscow to counterbalance the de-Stalinization processes in Hungary that centered around three major issues: 1./ The economic and public service situation had become paralyzed by 1952 and 1953, and would have required immediate change and reorganization regardless of Stalin's death. 2./ The Communist Information Bureau needed to reach a consensus regarding the "small Cold War" waged against Yugoslavia, where geographical proximity made Hungary a "front country" in the border zone. 3./ Dealing with the worst cases of the Hungarian Stalinist reign of terror and the rehabilitation of victims of judicial murders.

In the beginning, Soviet de-Stalinization policies were strongly in favor of reinforcing the government institutional system, and Soviet party leadership considered the once temporarily removed politician and veteran Muscovite Imre Nagy to be an appropriate candidate for the position of Prime Minister, but not all issues could be resolved

31 At the time of Stalin's death, Rákosi was considered a doyen among the communist party leaders of the satellite states and few veteran members of the Moscow party leadership were older than he was.

through him or his new government. Regarding the three key issues mentioned above, the Hungarian "communist New Deal" did launch a series of measures to resolve the crisis of the Hungarian economy, improve public services, and release prisoners, internees and forcefully removed persons. However, the second and third issues had a certain political interdependency due to the fact that resolving either would have led to the exposure of Mátyás Rákosi's political crimes. At the time of the most well-known Hungarian show trial known as the "Rajk affair", the judicial murder of László Rajk and his associates served as a means of permanently excommunicating and slandering President Tito. However, following Stalin's death, the reconciliation process between Moscow and Belgrade demanded the reinvestigation of the Rajk affair in Budapest, which would have compromised Rákosi's position as leader of the party since he had personally and arrogantly exposed himself in the Rajk-Tito case. It was therefore crucial for Rákosi's "political survival" that his pre-1953 actions remain undisclosed, and he could count on the allegiance of his second "accomplice" Ernő Gerő as well as the old and new leaders of the State Security Authority that carried out these judicial murders en masse. (Rákosi also had allies in the form of dedicated party bureaucrats who actively helped establish and operate Rákosi's reign of terror.)

Due to the above mentioned Hungarian political situation, the result was a spectacular display of prominent post-Stalinist politicians Mátyás Rákosi and Imre Nagy turning their backs on each other and steering the Hungarian canoe in opposite directions, but more importantly, the rivalry between the government administration of Imre Nagy and Rákosi's party leadership could hardly be sustained once Soviet party leadership withdrew its support from Imre Nagy a year later due to international considerations. In fact, Soviet party leadership experienced such rhapsodic political shifts after 1953 that the desirability of their local resident puppets also fluctuated accordingly. In the end, Rákosi came out triumphant in the struggle and assumed full power from the spring of 1955, while Imre Nagy was removed not only from every position of power but also from the Hungarian Workers' Party. However, barely a year later in February 1956, another political shift occurred as a result of the

Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, where Khrushchev openly declared Stalinism or at least its unbridled terror invalid, which meant that it was only a matter of time before the curtain would fall on Rákosi's re-Stalinization regime in Hungary. Since Rákosi had also become a *persona non grata* due to the geopolitical affair between Khrushchev and Tito, he was dismissed by Soviet party leadership in the summer of 1956 with the active assistance of his closest fellow party leaders,<sup>32</sup> and disappeared from Hungary to spend the rest of his life in the Soviet Union as an isolated and barely tolerated political emigrant.

The Hungarian particularities of the de-Stalinization process in Budapest were twofold to the extent that, unlike the Soviet Union after Stalin's death, the political shift in Hungary was to occur while the "small Stalin" was still in a position of leadership, and Rákosi had also become a burden not only in Hungary, but also in the Soviet processes of refashioning the "Socialist Bloc" with relatively little success due to the national specificities of the satellite states. As the European buffer zone was brought under the supervision of the Soviet Union in the course of the escalating Cold War, the region saw the steady rise of vehement reconstitutions in the spirit of Stalinist totalitarianism. However, from the very beginning, these resulting subsidiary dictatorships diverged from the original organizational schemes due to their local specificities, as first evidenced by the autochthonous "national communism" of Tito's Yugoslavia. Despite all the apparent contradictions of the de-Stalinization processes of the satellite states, their most shared characteristic was that these states had become increasingly distinguishable based on their national character, proving that Stalin's "Soviet-Russian" national bolshevism could only be adapted, not carbon copied. As a result, Moscow was forced to acknowledge in several declarations in the course of 1956 that the idea of "communist internationalism" as a new type of

<sup>32</sup> For more details, see Rainer M., János. 1999. *Nagy Imre. Politikai életrajz* ['Imre Nagy: A Political Biography']. Volume II. Budapest: 1956-os Intézet; Gyarmati, György. 2011. *A Rákosi-korszak. Rendszerváltó fordulatok évtizede Magyarországon, 1945–1956* ['The Rákosi Era: A Decade of Regime-Changing Turns in Hungary, 1945–1956']. Budapest: ÁBTI–Rubicon.

"international system" could only be sustainable as a confederation that takes into account the national specificities of its member states. While such a concept was still far from acknowledging the pluralism of "existing socialisms", the de-Stalinization process did manage to leave behind the "monolithic internationalism" demanded and expected by Stalin's former regime.





The Realignment of the State Security Service  
of the German Democratic Republic  
as a Result of the De-Stalinization Crisis,  
1953–1956

The year before Stalin's death was probably the harshest and most repressive period of GDR history. The German policy of the Soviet Union, aimed at preventing West Germany from being integrated into the Western alliance system, culminated in the Stalin Notes of March 1952, and since it proved to be a failure,<sup>1</sup> the Soviet Union encouraged General Secretary Walter Ulbricht to accelerate the Sovietization of East Germany. As early as May 1952, GDR leadership ordered the fortification of the Western border with a system of staggered exclusion zones, from which thousands of "unreliable" persons were subsequently expelled.<sup>2</sup> In July, the "Länder" or former states were abolished and replaced by a centralistic administration subdivided into fourteen districts. Meanwhile, the ranks of the State Security Service and the *Kasernierte Volkspolizei* ['Barracked People's Police'], which was in fact a clandestine army, increased remarkably.<sup>3</sup> The Socialist Unity Party (*Sozialistische Einheitspartei*

1 For context, see Wettig, Gerhard. 1999. *Bereitschaft zu Einheit in Freiheit? Die sowjetische Deutschlandpolitik 1945–1955* ['A Willingness for Unity in Freedom? Soviet German Policy 1945–1955']. München: Olzog, pp. 205–234.

2 See Bennewitz, Inge and Potratz, Rainer. 2012. *Zwangsaussiedlungen an der innerdeutschen Grenze. Analysen und Dokumente* ['Deportations at the Inner German Border: Analyses and Documents']. 4th updated and extended edition. Berlin: Ch. Links, pp. 14–84.

3 See Gieseke, Jens. 2000. *Die hauptamtlichen Mitarbeiter der Staatssicherheit*.

*Deutschlands*, henceforth: SED) also intensified its policy against the churches. Pastors and laymen linked to the church were arrested, and the protestant youth organization, *Junge Gemeinde* ['Young Congregation'], was under increasing attack because it proved to be an obstacle to the recruitment of young people for the regime's youth organization, *Freie Deutsche Jugend* ['Free German Youth'].<sup>4</sup>

In July 1952, at its Second Party Conference, the SED announced a new policy for the "systematic implementation of socialism," which was directed primarily against the private sector and effectively meant that private farmers, merchants, professionals and small industrialists lost their right to exist in the GDR. In Spring of 1953, freelance professionals were excluded from public health care and the social security system, and no longer received food ration cards.<sup>5</sup> A systematic harassment of the middle class and the private farmers accompanied the collectivization of agriculture and trade. Non-fulfillment of delivery quotas and tax shortfalls provided the pretext for administrative measures and criminal prosecutions, where authorities abused elastic clauses in the economic penal law to criminalize landholders and expropriate their property. In order to avoid harassment, discrimination and criminalization, many private farmers joined the agricultural production cooperatives, while others immigrated to West Germany and left their land behind.<sup>6</sup> By Spring of 1953, the criminalization and elimination of the private sector

*Personalstruktur und Lebenswelt. 1950–1989/90* ['The Full-Time Employees of State Security: Personnel Structure and Lifestyle']. Berlin: Ch. Links, pp. 85–90. See also Diedrich, Torsten and Wenzke, Rüdiger. 2001. *Die Getarnte Armee. Geschichte der Kasernierten Volkspolizei der DDR 1952–1956* ['The Clandestine Army: History of the Barracked People's Police']. Berlin: Ch. Links, pp. 86–223.

<sup>4</sup> See Wentker, Hermann. 1994. "Der Konflikt um die Junge Gemeinde 1950–1953" ['The Conflict About the *Junge Gemeinde*, 1950–1953']. *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 42 (1994): pp. 95–127.

<sup>5</sup> See Steiner, André. 2001. *Von Plan zu Plan. Eine Wirtschaftsgeschichte der DDR* ['The Plans That Failed: An Economic History of the GDR']. München: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, pp. 77.

<sup>6</sup> See Werkentin, Falco. 1997. *Politische Strafstjustiz in der Ära Ulbricht. Vom bekennenden Terror zur verdeckten Repression* ['Political Criminal Justice in the GDR: From Self-Declared Terror to Hidden Repression']. 2nd updated edition. Berlin: Ch. Links, pp. 76–80.

caused a significant deterioration in the supply situation, which led to a genuine crisis due to extreme shortages in agricultural products such as butter, margarine, meat, vegetables and sugar. In addition, the forced development of the heavy industry at the expense of other sectors provoked a shortage of industrial consumer goods as well.<sup>7</sup>

In the field of criminal justice, genuinely Stalinist legal norms like the "Law for the Protection of People's Property" of October 1952 were introduced, which provided exorbitant punishments even for minor property crimes. Under the new law, even in bagatelle cases that resulted from common supply problems the mandatory minimum penalty of one year imprisonment had to be applied. The resulting persecution mainly affected workers and caused a dramatic increase in the prison population of the GDR. In July 1952, there were 31,000 detainees, but by May 1953 the number of prisoners more than doubled to 66,000.<sup>8</sup>

The growing repressions against the middle class, the tightening ideological pressure, the struggle against the churches and especially the escalating economic problems led to a dramatic rise in emigration to Western Germany. The highest rates were recorded in the Spring of 1953; between January and June 1953, almost two hundred thousand individuals left the GDR.<sup>9</sup>

Initially, SED leadership seemed unconcerned by the catastrophic consequences of its own policies, but the Soviet leaders who came into power after Stalin's death looked at the increasing emigration movement with growing concern, and after intensive internal discussions, they imposed a radical change of policy on the SED. At the beginning of June 1953, the General Secretary of the Party, Walter Ulbricht, Prime Minister Otto Grotewohl, and Politburo member Fred Oelßner (a fluent speaker of Russian) were summoned to Moscow, where the Soviet communist leaders handed them a draft memorandum of the policies of the "New Course." The surprised GDR leaders were criticized because

7 See Steiner 2001, op. cit., pp. 73–78.

8 See Werkentin 1997, op. cit., p. 106.

9 See van Melis, Damian and Bispinck, Henrik. 2006. *"Republikflucht." Flucht und Abwanderung aus der DDR 1945 bis 1961* ["Flight from the Republic: Escape and Emigration from the GDR from 1945 to 1961"]. München: Oldenbourg, p. 255.

their "incorrect political line" caused an "extremely unsatisfactory political and economic situation" and "serious disaffection" among the people. According to the Soviet leaders, it was a fundamental mistake to pursue "the course of an accelerated implementation of Socialism" without taking into account the existence of "objective preconditions."<sup>10</sup> Soviet secret police chief Lavrentii Beria was the first to speak out and demanded a total revision of the GDR leaders' policy, including the dissolution of agricultural production cooperatives that had not been created "on a voluntary basis" or had proven economically unviable, an end to the discrimination and excessive taxation of the middle class, a reduction in the exaggerated pace of development of the heavy industry, and greater focus on the consumer goods sector. Finally, Beria called for greater legality, a review of sentences under criminal law, and the rescinding of repressive measures against the churches.<sup>11</sup>

The Soviet Union's sudden change of policy weakened the position of Walter Ulbricht, who had been the chief protagonist of the SED's harsh political course. At the next meeting of the SED Politburo on June 9, the discussion of the Soviet "suggestions" quickly turned into a general critique of Ulbricht's autocratic leadership style and sparked a major power struggle that would engage and paralyze the Politburo to a certain extent for the next six weeks.<sup>12</sup> The events that ensued can be regarded as the first culmination of the de-Stalinization crisis in the communist world.

<sup>10</sup> Quotations from the memorandum taken from Stöckigt, Rolf. 1990. "Ein Dokument von besonderer politischer Bedeutung vom Mai 1953" ['A Document of Special Political Importance from May 1953']. *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung*, 32 (1990): pp. 648–672.

<sup>11</sup> See Wilke, Manfred and Voigt, Tobias. 2000. "'Neuer Kurs' und 17. Juni. Die zweite Staatsgründung der DDR 1953" ['The "New Course" and June 17: The Second Foundation of the GDR in 1953']. In Wilke, Manfred and Hegedüs, András (eds.) *Satelliten nach Stalins Tod. Der "Neue Kurs" – 17. Juni in der DDR – Ungarische Revolution 1956* ['Satellites after Stalin's Death: The "New Course" – June 17 in the GDR – Hungarian Revolution 1956']. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, pp. 24–135.

<sup>12</sup> See Müller-Enbergs, Helmut. 1991. *Der Fall Rudolf Herrnstadt. Tauwetterpolitik vor dem 17. Juni* ['The Case of Rudolf Herrnstadt: The Thaw Policy before June 17']. Berlin: Ch. Links, pp. 222–309.

When the "New Course" was announced on June 11 via a Politburo communiqué published in the central SED party organ, *Neues Deutschland* ['New Germany'], the political weakness of the leadership affected the whole Party. Not only did the sudden turn in political policy disorient Party members, but the people in East Germany also perceived it as a symptom of political weakness or even political bankruptcy. This psychologically very difficult situation for those in power was one of the main reasons for the outbreak of the uprising a few days later. The concessions to the middle class were perceived by the working class as a willingness to compromise in other matters as well, such as their struggle against the attempts of the SED to increase production norms. However, since the GDR leaders remained immovable, on June 16, strikes and protests broke out in East Berlin that spread to the entire country on the following day. By June 17, the SED had lost power in almost all the industrial centers of the GDR, to the point where we may say that only the intervention of Soviet troops saved the communist regime in East Germany.<sup>13</sup>

Since the SED pretended to rule in the name of the working class, the fact that this very group was the backbone of the June uprising traumatized communists across the country, who were not misled by the implausible official interpretation of the events as a "fascist coup attempt." Those in power were caught off guard by the uprising as well, so the State Security Service (the *Stasi*), whose duty was to prevent such events, came under heavy criticism. The cards were now reshuffled in the power struggle within the SED leadership and the position of Wilhelm Zaisser, head of the State Security Service and Ulbricht's chief antagonist at the Politburo, was weakened. After Beria's arrest on June 26, Zaisser lost all support in Moscow, which in turn decided the outcome of the power struggle in Berlin.

At the end of July, at the Fifteenth Plenum of the SED Central Committee, Zaisser lost his post as Minister of State Security, was expelled from the leadership organs of the SED, and several months later, from the Party itself as well. He was accused among other things

<sup>13</sup> For a recent overview see Kowalczyk, Ilko-Sascha. 2013. *17. Juni 1953* ['June 17, 1953']. München: Ch. Beck.

of having isolated the State Security apparatus from the Party, which, according to Ulbricht, ostensibly explained the complete failure of the secret police before, during and after the uprising. These arguments were clearly instrumental in legitimizing Zaisser's removal, but they also had practical consequences for the *Stasi*, since the Ministry of State Security was downgraded to a State Secretariat and incorporated into the Ministry of the Interior. This measure had in fact been decided a few weeks earlier, before Zaisser's position began to crumble, and was intended as a mere realignment so that the GDR would have the same institutional structures as the Soviet Union and other communist countries. However, in the newly arising situation, these measures seemed more like punishment.<sup>14</sup>

Ernst Wollweber, the former state secretary in charge of shipping at the Ministry of Transportation, who had served as a major maritime sabotage specialist for the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs (*Narodniy Komissariat Vnutrennikh Del*, NKVD) in the 1930's, became the new head of State Security. He was by no means Ulbricht's preferred candidate for the position, which goes to show that his appointment and other related decisions remained the responsibility of the Soviets.<sup>15</sup>

In light of the Party's criticism, Wollweber had to reorganize the secret police and establish a better connection to the Party apparatus, expand informant networks, especially in those areas where the June uprising concentrated, and implement more offensive intelligence tactics to destroy Western contact networks in the GDR. In operations called "Concentrated Blows," widespread arrests were carried out against agents and contact persons of the Western intelligence services and of various political organizations, such as the Eastern

<sup>14</sup> See Fricke, Karl Wilhelm and Engelmann, Roger. 2003. *Der "Tag X" und die Staatssicherheit. 17. Juni 1953 – Reaktionen und Konsequenzen im Machtapparat* ['The "Day X" and State Security: June 17, 1953 – Reactions and Consequences within the Power Apparatus']. Bremen: Edition Temmen, pp. 147–156.

<sup>15</sup> See Engelmann, Roger. 2003. "Ernst Wollweber (1898–1967). Chefsaboteur der Sowjets und Zuchtmeister der Stasi" ['Ernst Wollweber: The Soviets' Saboteur-in-Chief and the Taskmaster of the Stasi']. In Krüger, Dieter and Wagner, Armin (eds.) *Konspiration als Beruf. Deutsche Geheimdienstchefs im Kalten Krieg* ['Conspiracy as a Profession: German Secret Service Chiefs in the Cold War']. Berlin: Ch. Links, pp. 179–206.

Offices ("Ostbüros") of the West German political parties. Through these operations, the GDR secret police sought to prove that it had successfully eradicated the "underground movement" that was allegedly behind the events of June 17.<sup>16</sup> The process of realignment of the State Security Service was monitored very closely by the Soviet advisors, who were likely dissatisfied with these new practices, since Soviet intelligence normally preferred more quiet operations aimed at infiltrating enemy organizations.

For the Ministry of State Security, one of the most important consequences of the June 17 uprising and the ensuing criticism of the Party was the establishment of a reporting system with respective organizational structures, which produced daily information for the Politburo on security matters and the popular mood in East Germany. This system was meant to provide an early warning system for the GDR leadership, and played an integral role in the East German dictatorship until 1989.

In addition to realigning the State Security Service with the Party apparatus and eliminating Western contact networks, Wollweber was also expected to improve the network of secret informants, which was too scarce and scattered to be effective. Since a significant increase in informants was impossible with the existing personnel, Wollweber introduced a new category of unofficial collaborator, the *Geheime Hauptinformatoren* ['main secret informants'], who were responsible for managing other unofficial collaborators. These informants were placed primarily in larger factories and bureaucracies, where they ran small informant networks.<sup>17</sup> In 1954, the number of informants increased considerably as the *Stasi* nearly doubled their recruitment compared to other years. The growth was especially explosive in the strongholds of the 1953 uprising: the districts of Halle, Leipzig, Gera and Frankfurt (Oder).<sup>18</sup> However, the Party failed in its attempt to

16 See Fricke, Karl Wilhelm and Engelmann, Roger. 1998. "Konzentrierte Schläge." *Staatssicherheitsaktionen und politische Prozesse in der DDR 1953-1956* ["Concentrated blows: Actions of the State Security Service and Political Trials in the GDR, 1953-1956"]. Berlin: Ch. Links.

17 See Fricke and Engelmann 1998, op. cit., pp. 132-141.

18 See Müller-Enbergs. 1996. *Inoffizielle Mitarbeiter des Ministeriums für Staats-*

impose stricter political control over the secret police due to the opposition of the Soviet advisors, who were keen on maintaining their dominant position within the GDR State Security apparatus.<sup>19</sup>

All measures considered, the SED did not officially abandon the "New Course," and the repression after the June uprising was relatively mild. Only 1,500 people were sentenced for their role in the uprising by East German courts, along with several hundred by Soviet military tribunals, and in the second half of 1953, authorities released some 24,000 detainees, which dramatically decreased the prisoner population in the GDR.<sup>20</sup> However, in 1954–1955, the SED's policy became increasingly repressive once again, although the regime did not return completely to the harsh policies of the period before the June uprising.

When Khrushchev triggered a second de-Stalinization wave in February 1956 with his Secret Speech at the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Kommunisticheskaya Partiya Sovetskogo Soyuza, KPSS, henceforth: CPSU), Ulbricht sought to resist change as much as possible. He was particularly keen on avoiding what he called "discussions of mistakes," as such discussions had given rise to the protests of 1953 and endangered his position at that time, but he still had to make some concessions in the end. The application of criminal law was attenuated once again, and in 1956, 35,000 prisoners were released, even more than in 1953.<sup>21</sup>

In July, as part of the de-Stalinization process in Hungary, Mátyás Rákosi was removed as the head of the Hungarian Workers' Party,

*sicherheit. Richtlinien und Durchführungsbestimmungen* ['Unofficial Informers of the Ministry of State Security: Guidelines and Implementation Guidelines']. 2nd revised edition. Berlin: Ch. Links, p. 35.

19 See Engelmann, Roger. 1997. "Diener zweier Herren. Das Verhältnis der Staatssicherheit zur SED und den sowjetischen Beratern 1950–1959" ['Servant of Two Masters: The Relationship of the State Security Service to the SED and the Soviet Advisors, 1950–1959']. In Suckut, Siegfried and Süß, Walter (eds.) *Staatspartei und Staatssicherheit. Zum Verhältnis von SED und MfS* ['State Party and State Security: The Relationship between SED and MfS']. Berlin: Ch. Links, pp. 55–58.

20 See Kowalczyk 2013, op. cit., pp. 108–109.

21 See Werkentin 1997, op. cit., p. 347.



an event that might have worried Ulbricht as the GDR media kept quiet about Rákosi's removal for several days. However, his main preoccupation remained that de-Stalinization could lead to an "ideological weakening" of the Party and as a result to the regime's fall from power. As early as May 1956, in a speech to the leading officers of the *Stasi*, Ulbricht declared that the "enemy" sought to exploit the discussions about Stalin's mistakes in order to infiltrate the socialist countries. According to him, the "enemy" wanted to capitalize on certain moods among intellectuals and in the Party, but the State Security was not prepared to respond to these "new methods."<sup>22</sup>

Party intellectuals in particular welcomed de-Stalinization, while Ulbricht's reluctance regarding the issue was quite unpopular according to *Stasi* reports about the popular mood of East Germany. By October 1956, Ulbricht was considered to be "the worst Stalinist still in power" even among Party members,<sup>23</sup> and calls for his resignation intensified. Many intellectuals who hoped for political changes and greater freedom of opinion began to orient towards Poland and Hungary, where de-Stalinization had much more impact than in the GDR. Particularly intensive were the relations of literary intellectuals with their Polish and Hungarian colleagues. For instance, Wolfgang Harich, chief editor of the important literary press *Aufbau Verlag* and a lecturer of Philosophy at Humboldt University in Berlin, exchanged ideas with Leszek Kołakowski and György Lukács. For his actions, Harich was soon denounced by Ulbricht as the "chief revisionist conspirator" and arrested in November 1956. Despite Harich's arrest, Lukács remained extremely popular among GDR intellectuals, and his appointment to Minister of Culture in the government of Imre Nagy was warmly welcomed. Following the example of the Hungarian

22 See Engelmann, Roger. 2008. "Lehren aus Polen und Ungarn 1956. Die Neuorientierung der DDR-Staatssicherheit als Resultat der Entstalinisierungskrise" ['Lessons from Poland and Hungary in 1956: The Reorientation of the GDR's State Security as a Result of the De-Stalinization Crisis']. In Engelmann, Roger et al. (eds.) *Kommunismus in der Krise. Die Entstalinisierung 1956 und die Folgen* ['Communism in Crisis: De-Stalinization 1956 and the Consequences']. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, pp. 283–286.

23 Ibidem, p. 288.

"Petöfi Circle," students at Humboldt University established a "Jacobin Club," which, in contrast to the situation in Budapest, was immediately dissolved. Regardless, the students met all the same and discussed Khrushchev's Secret Speech and the autobiography of the communist "renegade" Wolfgang Leonhard, *Die Revolution entlässt ihre Kinder* ['The Revolution Releases Its Children'].<sup>24</sup> *Sonntag* ['Sunday'], the weekly magazine of the Cultural Association of the GDR (*Kulturbund der DDR*, KB), became the main forum for intellectuals supporting de-Stalinization and mainly documented the political and cultural developments in Poland.<sup>25</sup> Gustav Just and Heinz Zöger, the magazine's editors, as well as Walter Janka, the head of the affiliated *Aufbau Verlag* press, were later imprisoned as leading "revisionists."

When Władysław Gomułka was elected First Secretary of the Polish United Workers' Party (*Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza*, PZPR, henceforth: the PUWP) on October 21, the popular East Berlin newspaper *BZ am Abend* ['Berlin Evening Mail'], which tried to publish a photo of Gomułka and a small part of his inaugural speech, was confiscated on the same day it published.<sup>26</sup> *Stasi* chief Ernst Wollweber just "happened" to be in Poland at the time, more specifically at the health resort at Kurdowa-Zdrój to receive treatment after a heart attack, and during the dramatic Eighth Congress of the PUWP, at which Gomułka was elected First Secretary, he rushed to Warsaw for an informal talk with his Polish colleagues. He spoke with the head of the Committee for Public Security, Edmund Pszczółkowski; his deputy, Antoni Alster, and Minister of the Interior Władysław Wicha. Wollweber wondered why the representatives of the Polish State Security supported Gomułka, and found that the reason was

24 Ibidem, pp. 287–290.

25 See Brandt, Marion. 2002. *Für eure und unsere Freiheit? Der Polnische Oktober und die Solidarność-Revolution in der Wahrnehmung von Schriftstellern der DDR* ['For Your Freedom and Ours? The Polish October and the Solidarność Revolution in the Perception of GDR Writers']. Berlin: Weidler, pp. 132–134.

26 See Wolle, Stefan. 1996. "Polen und die DDR im Jahre 1956" ['Poland and the GDR in 1956']. In Henning Hahn, Hans and Olschowsky, Heinrich (eds.) *Das Jahr 1956 in Ostmitteleuropa* ['1956 in East Central Europe']. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, p. 52.

that the authority of the Polish State Security had been completely destroyed. Gomułka, who now needed the assistance of the secret police, promised to restore it and thereby won its support.<sup>27</sup>

After Wollweber returned to Berlin, he spoke about Gomułka's increasing support and the state of the Polish State Security with Ulbricht, who argued that the Polish State Security should have prevented Gomułka from coming to power. Wollweber, who was pushed into the role of defending his Polish colleagues, replied that if they had done so, they would have acted against the will of the Central Committee of the PUWP, which signaled to Ulbricht that in a similar critical situation in the GDR, he would not be able to count on Wollweber's support.<sup>28</sup>

When the political situation in Hungary began to spiral out of control at the beginning of November 1956, Ulbricht felt completely confirmed in his opinion that the de-Stalinization process threatened to destabilize the regime. As early as November 5, he wrote a memorandum to the employees of the *Stasi*, stating that "the example of Hungary teaches us never to make the mistakes of the Hungarian Party, but instead to resolutely nip in the bud all attempts of the counterrevolution to restore capitalism."<sup>29</sup> A few days later, after the Twenty-Ninth Session of the SED Central Committee, he argued that after the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU, "the Comrades of the State Security became so prudent that they were no longer able to act energetically against enemies of the State."<sup>30</sup> Three months later, at its Thirtieth Plenum, the SED Central Committee officially canonized Ulbricht's interpretation of the Polish and Hungarian events, and the dissident discussions among GDR intellectuals over the past year were placed in the context of the "softening-up tactics of imperialism."<sup>31</sup> The State Security Service received an order to adapt

27 BStU, MfS SdM 1201. pp. 424–433. Report of Wollweber, without date (end of October 1956).

28 See Engelmann 2008, op. cit., pp. 286–287.

29 BA, DY 30 IV 2/12/102. 314–317. Draft of the letter, November 5, 1956.

30 BA, DY 30 IV 2/1/166. pp. 147–148. Stenographic report of the 29th plenary session of the Central Committee of the SED, November 12–14, 1956.

31 BA, DY 30 IV 2/1/170. pp. 77–85. Stenographic report of the 30th plenary

itself to the "new enemy methods" of "ideological disintegration" caused by "revisionist, opportunist and liberalist views."<sup>32</sup>

The outcome of the de-Stalinization crisis of 1956 strengthened Ulbricht's position not only within the GDR, but also internationally within the Soviet Bloc. In 1957, Wollweber, East German chief of State Security, who hesitated to adopt Ulbricht's views and lost his trust, was removed from his post after a conflict that also led to the dismissal of the main KGB representative in East Berlin, Yevgenii Pitovranov.<sup>33</sup> The political control of the *Stasi*, which had previously lain, for the most part, in the hands of the Soviet advisors, was now taken over completely by the Party. As a consequence, in 1958, the Soviet advisor apparatus was dissolved and transformed into a small staff of liaison officers.<sup>34</sup>

Once Ulbricht's position solidified, he now had the power to impose his ideas on state security matters without any compromises, so he unleashed a rigorous campaign of repression against the "revisionists." In December 1957, a "supplementary law to the criminal code" was enacted and served as the basis for sentencing several "revisionist" intellectuals to long prison terms in 1957 and 1958. They were all charged with "treason against the state," a criminal offence that was defined not only in terms of "violent subversion," but also in terms of a "systematic undermining" of the "constitutional order of the state and the society." On these grounds, even members of informal circles discussing political issues contrary to the Party line were criminalized as "traitors to the state."<sup>35</sup>

session of the Central Committee of the SED, January 30 – February 1, 1957.

32 BStU, MfS, KL-SED 364, pp. 1001–1003. Instruction of the executive committee of the SED party organization within the Ministry of State Security, February 14, 1957.

33 See Engelmann, Roger and Schumann, Silke. 1995. "Der Ausbau des Überwachungsstaates. Der Konflikt Ulbricht – Wollweber und die Neuausrichtung des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der DDR 1957" ['The Expansion of the Surveillance State: The Conflict between Ulbricht and Wollweber and the Realignment of the State Security Service of the GDR in 1957']. *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 43 (1995): pp. 341–378.

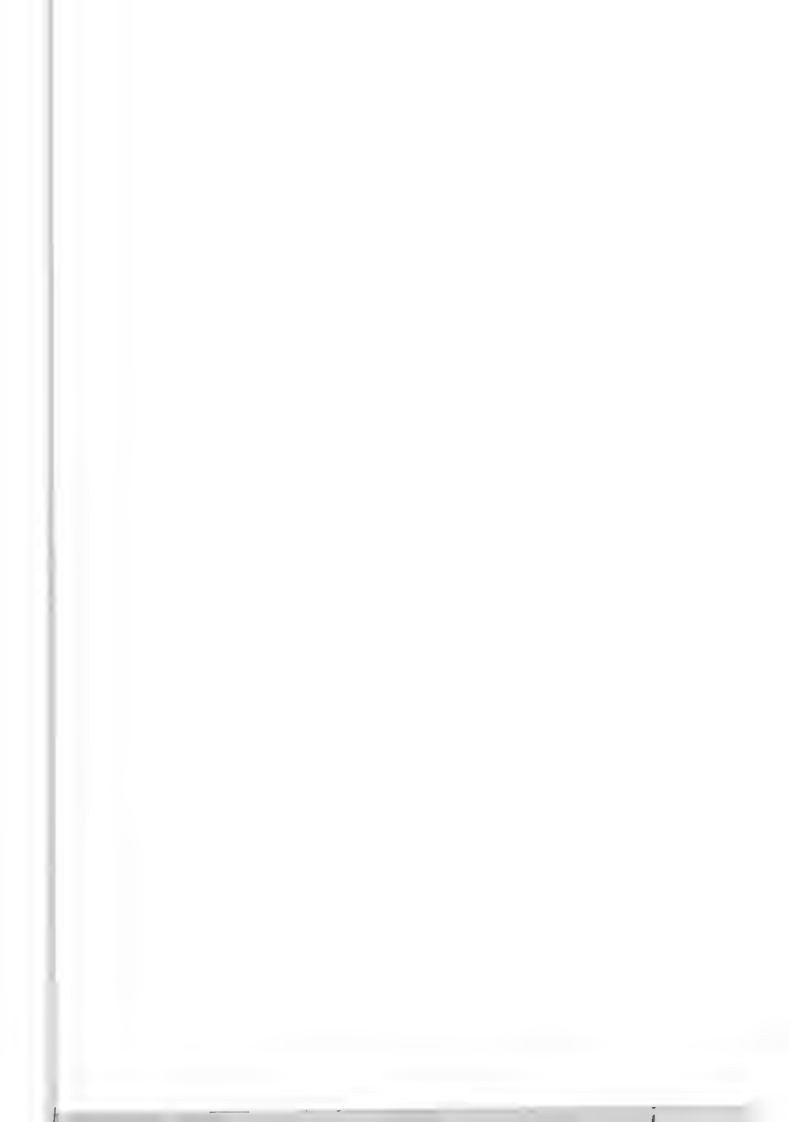
34 See Engelmann 1997, op. cit., pp. 70–72.

35 See Engelmann, Roger. 1999. "Staatssicherheitsjustiz. Zur Entwicklung ge-

Ulbricht's personal role in the realignment of the State Security Service cannot be understated, as he quickly drew conclusions from the de-Stalinization crisis in 1956 and managed to secure his hold on power in the long term. He successfully launched a process aimed at enabling the secret police to fight the phenomenon of "ideological disintegration." The struggle against "political-ideological subversion" became a key watchword for the *Stasi*, especially in terms of its conception of the enemy and its operational orientation. There is some evidence that this term originated from the GDR, and that the Soviets in particular viewed this concept with some suspicion, since they claimed that fighting ideological deviations was the Party's duty rather than the task of the secret police.<sup>36</sup> However, in the long run, the term "political-ideological subversion" with all its consequences for surveillance activities and repressive measures was adopted more or less by all communist security services in the Soviet Bloc. At any rate, in the GDR, this concept generated a system of broad preventive surveillance and a process of extreme expansion of the State Security apparatus over the following years.

heimpolizeilicher und justizieller Strukturen im Bereich der politischen Strafverfolgung der DDR 1950–1963" ['State Security Justice: The Development of the Secret Police and Judicial Structures in the Field of Prosecution for Political Crimes']. In Engelmann, Roger and Vollnhals, Clemens (eds.) *Justiz im Dienste der Partei Herrschaft. Rechtspraxis und Staatssicherheit in der DDR* ['Justice in the Service of the Party's Rule: Judicial Practice and State Security in the GDR']. Berlin: Ch. Links, pp. 156–160.

<sup>36</sup> See Engelmann 2008, op. cit., pp. 294–296.



PAWEŁ SASANKA

From the Defection of Józef Światło  
to Moczar's Ministry of the Interior  
*The Collapse and Restoration of the Polish Security  
Apparatus (1954–1964)*

Postwar Polish history can be described as a sequence of socio-political crises, sometimes referred to as the "Polish months," marking the entire period from 1945 until 1989. Taking into account the social aspirations of that era as well as today's point of view, these crises can be divided in extremely simplified terms into "positive" and "negative". The "positive" events include October 1956 (liberalization, the rise to power of former communist party leader Władysław Gomułka, avoiding Soviet military intervention), August 1980 (the birth of the "Solidarity" movement with over nine million members), and June 1989 (partially free elections on June 4, which began the process of political transformation). The "negative" months include many more events, bearing in mind, however, that they were often closely associated with the "positive" ones, whether by cause or consequence. These were June 1956 (the revolt in Poznań), March 1968 (an anti-Semitic, anti-intelligentsia, and anti-student witch-hunt), December 1970 (a massacre in northern Poland), June 1976 (repressions against striking workers in Radom, Ursus, and Płock), and December 1981 (martial law).

A historian should probably avoid extreme simplification that ultimately depends on our subjective points of view, but I referenced the major events of postwar Polish history above to show that if we were to look at these same events from the perspective of the political police in the People's Republic of Poland, we would get a different

picture. On the one hand, the history of the police was, of course, intertwined with the political crises in Poland, and as we are about to see, it sometimes had an impact on their course. On the other hand, the evolution of the security apparatus structures or the networks of secret collaborators only to a certain extent reflected the stages of the history of the People's Republic and its socio-political situation. After a period of rapid development in the Stalinist era in the mid-1950's, the Polish security apparatus entered a deep slump that could be considered the greatest crisis in its history. Only later did it slowly begin to recover the position it had lost. In turn, the 1980's, the era of the "carnival of freedom" after the founding of the Solidarity movement, followed by the martial law, was the second "golden age" for the special services. By 1985, the number of officers and secret collaborators exceeded those of the Stalinist period.

In the mid-1950's, the deep crisis of the Polish security apparatus was closely linked to the socio-political crisis at all stages, from the first signs of change and liberalization in 1954, through its culmination in 1956, until the slow consolidation of the late 1950's. Before I go any further, I would like to note that this paper is not exhaustive due to the development of research in recent years, which yielded a large number of publications. In addition to research on the history of the People's Republic of Poland and the security apparatus, a significant advance has been noted of methodological and source studies that, in my view, made the study of the apparatus of repression in Poland a separate category of auxiliary sciences for contemporary history.<sup>1</sup> I shall thus focus on the presentation of mutual conditions: the impact of changes

1 Musiał, Filip (ed.) 2012. *Archiwalia komunistycznego aparatu represji: zagadnienia źródłoznawcze* ['Archives of the Communist Repressive Apparatus: Source Issues']. Krakow: Institute of National Remembrance; Musiał, Filip (ed.) 2008. *Osobowe źródła informacji: zagadnienia metodologiczno-źródłoznawcze* ['Personal Sources of Information: Methodology and Sources']. Krakow: Institute of National Remembrance; Musiał, Filip 2007. *Podręcznik bezpieczeństwa. Teoria pracy operacyjnej Służby Bezpieczeństwa w świetle wydawnictw resortowych Ministerstwa Spraw Wewnętrznych PRL (1970–1989)* ['Guidelines for the Secret Police: Theory of the Operative Work of the Security Services in Light of Departmental Publications of the Ministry of the Interior of the Polish People's Republic (1970–1989)']. Krakow: Institute of National Remembrance.



in the political situation in Poland on the security apparatus, and the (involuntary) impact of the situation of the security apparatus on the course of events. I shall then describe the main areas of continuities and discontinuities in the processes occurring within the security apparatus in a given period.

The crisis of the Polish security apparatus had its external conditions, namely the impulses reaching Poland from the Soviet Union and the progress of the de-Stalinization process. In general terms, this meant that the Party structures gained importance while the security apparatus lost its former power. It seems that many members of the elites of the authorities of the People's Republic understood de-Stalinization as curtailing the autonomy of the secret services that, having expanded in the early 1950's, had outgrown the communist party and were considered omnipotent.

External conditions, objectively contributing to the weakening of the security apparatus, were further exacerbated by an internal factor, the defection of service officer Józef Światło, which triggered and deepened the crisis within the secret services. In early December 1953, Światło fled to the West via Berlin, and his disappearance created a scale of the danger that can only be understood in light of his responsibilities and role in the Ministry of Public Security (*Ministerstwo Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego*, henceforth: MBP).

Józef Światło was Deputy Director of the secret Department X of the MBP, and as such, he worked in the key department of the most important ministry in Poland, known to inspire fear in society. Department X was charged with the surveillance of party members and the search for any "internal enemy" of the party – in other words, it was guarding the "purity" of the communist party ranks, and its activities were kept secret even from the rest of the MBP. According to Former Deputy Minister of Public Security Jan Ptasinski, who testified in 1955, "it was taboo, no one knew what was going on there."<sup>2</sup> Światło himself, after his meteoric rise in the structures of the

<sup>2</sup> Quoted from Ceranka, Paweł. 2007. "Reperkusje ucieczki Józefa Światły w Ministerstwie Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego" ['Repercussions after the Defection of Józef Światło in the Ministry of Public Security']. In *Departament X MBP*.

ministry, controlled the operative activities of Department X, and a special prison in Miedzeszyn near Warsaw that held, among others, former communist party leader Władysław Gomułka as well as other communists from the party elites. Światło had access to files with reports on all cases, lists of agents of the Department, and notes and guidelines concerning the direction of investigations submitted at meetings by Bolesław Bierut and Jakub Berman. He was also Deputy Minister Roman Romkowski's right-hand man for special tasks.<sup>3</sup>

Following Stalin's death, symptoms of change in Poland and signals from the Soviet Union after the fall of Beria alerted Światło to the fact that dark clouds were gathering over the security apparatus, and consequent changes might ensure his downfall. One such signal on July 7, 1953 was a working meeting of the officers of the MBP and the People's Militia (*Milicja Obywatelska*) together with the presidents of the provincial courts and provincial prosecutors, during which the issue of multiple violations of the law was addressed for the first time, including the use of unacceptable interrogation techniques. As a result of the changes taking place in the Soviet Union, the Politburo appointed a team whose task was to prepare a resolution on party control over the security apparatus. The essence of the difficult relationship of the latter with the party was aptly expressed by Ptasieński when he said that "individual employees go so far in their self-importance and partisan attitude as to begin to believe that because of their work in the security apparatus, they can control the activities of the party agencies."<sup>4</sup>

On December 5, 1953, Światło disappeared during a tour of Berlin while on a business trip to the German Democratic Republic.

*Wzorce, struktury, działanie* ['Department X of the MBP: Patterns, Structure, Operation']. Warsaw: Institute of National Remembrance and Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes Against the Polish Nation, p. 206.

<sup>3</sup> Ibidem, p. 207.

<sup>4</sup> Speech by Deputy Minister of Public Security Jan Ptasieński at the end of a vocational teacher training course on September 3, 1953. In Majchrzak, Grzegorz and Paczkowski, Andrzej (eds.) 2004. *Aparat bezpieczeństwa w Polsce w latach 1953–1954. Taktyka, strategia, metody* ['Security Apparatus in Poland in the Years 1953–1954: Tactics, Strategy, Methods']. Warsaw: Institute of National Remembrance, p. 213.

Interestingly, at first no one even considered that he might have defected. By that time, authorities were beginning to gauge the actual or likely scope of Światło's knowledge of the MBP, and found that was one of the most trusted and best informed people there.

Restructuring and reduction of the security apparatus began shortly after the disappearance of Światło, at an early stage in the process of de-Stalinization. At the beginning of 1954, when the MBP had to face a new wave of criticism from the party induced by events in the Soviet Union, "self-critique" for the mistakes of the "Berianism" began to gain popularity in the ministry. To show the desire for change and reduce pressure, administration decided to get rid of the most discredited officers, including Anatol Fejgin and Colonel Józef Rózański. Finally, in June, a decision was implemented to dissolve Department X, which was widely regarded as the epitome of evil.

In February 1954, job cuts began on a wider scale,<sup>5</sup> while a reform of the structures of the MBP was launched simultaneously, mainly by merging departments, along with modification of the working methods of the security apparatus. The reforms were announced in March 1954 at a national meeting of the administration activists of the MBP, held before the Second Congress of the Polish United Workers' Party (*Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza*, PZPR, henceforth: the PUWP). In addition to implementing reforms, Minister Stanisław Radkiewicz issued several disciplinary orders issued for "breaking the law" as a clear warning to the officers of the ministry. Personnel adjustments, however, were superficial, or as Andrzej Paczkowski put it, everything was done "at the backstage" of official political life.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, it is important to note that relations between the party and the security apparatus were mentioned at the Second Congress of the PUWP, and it was the first time that the secret police and its problems were subject of such a critical discussion on a public forum.

<sup>5</sup> Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance (*Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej*, AIPN), MBP, inventory unit (henceforth: 'inv. u.') 64. "Order No. 04/54 of the Minister of Public Security, February 27, 1954." p. 17.

<sup>6</sup> Paczkowski, Andrzej. 1996. *Pół wieku dziejów Polski 1939–1989* [Half a Century of Polish History, 1939–1989]. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, p. 293.

On September 28, 1954, the mystery of the disappearance of Józef Światło was finally explained when he appeared at a press conference in Washington. In a series of radio broadcasts titled "Behind the Scenes of the Secret Service and the Party" on Radio Free Europe, Światło exposed the most shameful secrets of the functioning of the Stalinist ruling elite and the practices of the apparatus of repression in Poland, an event that not only shocked society, but also the members of the PZP. An employee of a jamming station who remembered those broadcasts said that, "those interviews with Józef Światło – that man gave them a serious headache. It was a terrible time for the station. Everyone stood at attention, and while normally they checked if the transmitter was working properly every hour or every thirty minutes, it was every five minutes then, and every minute there was a phone call, telling us to do something, that we had to cover it more."<sup>7</sup> In total, 139 regular and thirty special programs were broadcast, until in February 1955, under "Operation Spotlight," a booklet was issued at the Free Europe Committee with the most interesting excerpts, which was later printed in large quantities and sent to Poland using hot air balloons.<sup>8</sup> As noted by Antoni Dudek, although everything Światło said seemed likely, and many people had come into contact with cases of repression, hardly anyone realized the actual scale of repression: "It was only Światło who publicly exposed in his broadcasts the terrifying face of the entire Stalinist system, in which the actual center of power was the security apparatus controlled by Soviet advisors."<sup>9</sup>

The mere fact of Światło's treason, though naturally very serious, was not as great a problem to the Polish communist elite as the radio broadcasts that exposed it. For instance, MBP officers came to the archives after work hours, where one could notice a "tendency for a

7 Account by Kazimierz Siczek from Wrocław. In Drygas, Maciej J. 2003. "Fale w eter" [Airwaves]. *Karta*, 38 (2003): p. 99.

8 Machcewicz, Paweł. 2007. "Monachijska menażeria." *Walka z Radiem Wolna Europa* [The "Munich Menagerie: Fighting Radio Free Europe"]. Warsaw: Institute of National Remembrance and Institute of Political Studies, pp. 96–101.

9 Dudek, Antoni. 2001. *Ślady PRLu – ludzie wydarzenia, mechanizmy* [Traces of the Polish People's Republic: People, Events, Mechanisms]. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Arkana, p. 17.

feverish review of the press from capitalist states in order to find out what the bourgeois press wrote regarding the provocateur Światło's broadcasts." Officers reported the deterioration of cooperation with agents, who now feared exposure, which shattered the myth of the dangerous ministry, "the sharp sword of the people's power."<sup>10</sup> Consequently, lowering the bar of fear had an impact on the course of de-Stalinization in Poland.<sup>11</sup>

The upheaval Światło provoked shows that the changes introduced thus far by the de-Stalinization process proved to be insufficient. At the end of 1954, after consultations in Moscow, the MBP, which combined the functions of the Department of the Interior and the political police, was closed down. In their place, two new bodies came into existence: the Ministry of the Interior (*Ministerstwo Spraw Wewnętrznych*, henceforth: MSW) and a separate Committee for Public Security (*Komitet ds. Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego*, henceforth: KBP; the name was a calque of the Soviet KGB), which included the political police. Officers of the party apparatus were appointed as the heads of these new institutions, namely Władysław Wicha (MSW) and Władysław Dworakowski (KBP). However, in March 1956, the latter was replaced by Edmund Pszczółkowski (also a party apparatchik), who guaranteed the party's control over the security apparatus. The last change before October 1956 took place in April 1955, when the supervision of prisons was removed from the security apparatus and transferred to the Ministry of Justice.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Ceranka 2007, op. cit., p. 219.

<sup>11</sup> Cenckiewicz, Sławomir. 2011. *Długie ramię Moskwy. Wywiad wojskowy Polski Ludowej 1943-1991 (wprowadzenie do syntezy)* ['The Long Arm of Moscow: The Polish People's Republic and Its Military Intelligence, 1943-1991 (From Introduction to Synthesis)']. Poznań: Zysk i S-ka, p. 44; Paczkowski, Andrzej. 2009. *Trzy twarze Józefa Światły* ['The Three Faces of Józef Światło']. Warsaw: Prószyński i S-ka, pp. 93-98.

<sup>12</sup> For a discussion of the structural changes and diagrams of the structure of the MBP in the years 1945-1954 and the KBP in 1955, see Persak, Krzysztof and Kamiński, Łukasz (eds.) 2005. *A Handbook of The Communist Security Apparatus in East Central Europe 1944-1989*. Warsaw: Institute of National Remembrance, pp. 224-227, 229.

Khrushchev's "Secret Speech," delivered during the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (*Kommunisticheskaya Partiya Sovetskogo Soyuza*, KPSS, henceforth: CPSU) and quickly disseminated in Poland, provoked an enormous response in the People's Republic. By voicing his criticism of the Generalissimo, the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU reinforced his own power while keeping members of the party leadership appointed by Stalin in check, since any of them could fall victim to such criticism at any time.<sup>13</sup> However, from the perspective of the communists ruling in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the unstable equilibrium in the leadership of the CPSU sent mixed signals from Moscow. Regardless of Khrushchev's intent, exposing and condemning the crimes of Stalin meant an end to the dogma of the infallibility of the Kremlin, and had far-reaching effects in the long term.

In the case of Poland, the shock caused by the disclosure of the Secret Speech was all the greater since the issue of the succession of Bolesław Bierut, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the PUPW, suddenly appeared on the agenda. Bierut was present at the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU, but died several days later, and was succeeded by Edward Ochab, who was accepted by Khrushchev as a "comrade who had proven himself in combat, who had been to a Polish prison, and who was a true communist."<sup>14</sup>

The new First Secretary of the Central Committee of the PUPW was unable to stop the progressively deeper divisions among the party's ruling elite, where in 1954, two factions formed consisting of activists advocating different routes out of the increasing crisis, the *natolińczycy* ['Natolin'] and the *puławianie* ['Puławy']. In the simplest terms, the "Natolin" faction represented the dogmatic wing, reluctant to allow any profound changes and ready to place all blame for Stalinism on individual persons, in particular the representatives of the "Puławy" group. Their strategy involved using nationalist and

13 See Taubman, William. 2003. *Khrushchev: The Man and His Era*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., pp. 278–291.

14 Eisler, Jerzy. 2014. *Siedmiu wspaniatyh. Poczet pierwszych sekretarzy KC PZPR* ['The Magnificent Seven: First Secretaries of the Central Committee of the PUPW']. Warsaw: Czerwone i Czarne, p. 116.

anti-Semitic rhetoric, since many among the "Puławy" group were of Jewish origin. In the struggle for influence, the *natolińczycy* courted the support of Moscow through various channels, since they had less control of the Polish media and thereby less influence on society than their rivals, the "Puławy." Meanwhile, the *puławianie*, who were in the high tiers of the hierarchy of power and usually more involved in Stalinism, now argued for a top-down reform that assumed partial liberalization and democratization of the political system. However, it is difficult to assess to what an extent their relative "liberalism" was a matter of personal belief and experience, a consequence of opportunism, or a natural consequence of a defensive attitude formed against accusations by the *natolińczycy*.<sup>15</sup> One arena for an open clash between the two factions was the especially turbulent Seventh Plenum of the Central Committee of the PZPR, the longest one in history, as it began on July 18 and lasted – with a two-day break – until July 28.<sup>16</sup>

The conflict brewing within the Polish party elites was a key element of the socio-political crisis. Already divided, Party leadership could not come up with a method to overcome the crisis, nor was it able to implement a coherent policy. As early as April 1956, the Politburo was forced to realize for the first time that propaganda and the press were slipping out of their control, and in September, the relaxation of the (until recently) iron-clad discipline reached even the military. In this context, we may conclude that the outbreak of the revolt in Poznań in June 1956 accelerated the October turning point, making the two warring parties realize the seriousness of the situation. In a sense, the outbreak also paved the way for Władysław

15 For more information, see Szumiło, Mirosław. 2014. *Roman Zambrowski 1909–1977. Studium z dziejów elity komunistycznej w Polsce* ['Study of the History of the Communist Elite in Poland']. Warsaw: Institute of National Remembrance, pp. 329–334; Friszke, Andrzej. 2003. "Rok 1956" ['The Year of 1956']. In Paczkowski, Andrzej (ed.) *Centrum władzy w Polsce 1948–1970* ['The Center of Power in Poland, 1948–1970']. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.

16 Against all rules, the transcript was never published. Władysław, Wiesław and Janowski, Włodzimierz (eds.) 2007. *Protokoły VI i VII Plenum Komitetu Centralnego Polskiej Zjednoczonej Partii Robotniczej z 1956 r.* ['Protocols of the Sixth and Seventh Plenums of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party in 1956']. Warsaw: Faculty of Journalism and Political Science.

Gomułka's rise to power. Activists of both factions began to realize that he was more popular as a prisoner of Stalinism than as the man who had personally introduced Stalinism as the Secretary General of the Polish Workers' Party in the years 1943–1948. He alone could control the situation, and once the *natolińczycy* and *puławianie* saw that Gomułka's support could determine the victory of one faction, they began to strive for his approval. Gomułka in turn was aware of his value and played for the highest stakes, which led to a political breakthrough in October 1956.

The Twentieth Congress of the CPSU found the political police plunged into chaos, demolished, and suffering from low morale. The Committee for Public Security had only been operating for a few months, rival members of party leadership were wary of the special services, the leadership of the latter feared purges, and many officers left the service, creating a situation that affected their ability to monitor the general mood of the population. When in June 1956, a workers' revolt broke out in Poznań, never in the history of the Polish People's Republic had the security apparatus been worse prepared for mass social unrests. The Poznań revolt followed the logic of revolutionary movements, which often occur not when the severity of oppression reaches its apex, but when attempts are made to liberalize it, which temporarily weakens the power that controls the entire process.

I shall briefly present the events of the Poznań revolt of June 1956, which began on June 28, 1956, when the workers of the largest factory in the city, the Joseph Stalin Metal Works (called the H. Cegielski Metal Industrial Complex before the war and after 1957) went on strike due to economic and social circumstances. It was a spark that ultimately triggered an explosion, as a small-scale conflict in one factory exploded into a much deeper crisis. The protest spread through the whole city and resulted in the collapse of the Stalinist apparatus of power in Poznań. In May 1945, demonstrations had already taken place and were then brutally suppressed, but the protest in Poznań was the first mass-scale social rebellion. In somewhat simplified terms of ideology, it ironically confirmed Marx's classical theory of the proletarian revolution where the working class rebelled against exploitation and poor working conditions. Only the authorities,



claiming to be the executor of the ideas of Marx, perceived the protest in terms of a counterrevolution.

The ranks of the workers' procession moving from the factory towards the city center quickly expanded as employees from other industrial plants joined the Poznań protest. During the procession, the protest started to gain a political dimension, which engendered yet another factor leading to a revolt. The marchers sang the national anthem, patriotic songs including the traditional "Rota" with anti-Russian overtones, and religious songs, which were interpreted as anti-communist. There were white-red flags and makeshift banners, admittedly dominated by economic slogans such as "We demand wage increases," "We want to live like people," or "We want bread." Political themes were present in the shouted slogans, such as "Down with the exploitation of labor," "Down with the red bourgeoisie," "We want freedom," "Down with Bolshevism," "We demand free elections," and even "Long live Mikołajczyk" (leader of the Polish People's Party, which was crushed in the 1940's). As the situation grew more and more heated, anti-Soviet shouts could also be heard, including "Down with Ruskiés," and "Down with the Muscovites."<sup>17</sup>

The simultaneous occurrence of socio-economic and political themes was a common feature of all social crises during the communist era in Poland. We may regard it as a derivative of the systemic feature of the communist regime, which perceived all manifestations of social activity as a threat, especially activity independent of the authorities in the political and ideological context. In the case of Poland, however, this meant that not only did the authorities associate everything with politics, but society also operated according to this logic, which was rather obvious from the point of view of an average person. As a result, when it came to an economic crisis and such were the first demands of protestors, they were as a rule followed by slogans and demands of a political nature.

During the Poznań revolt, a crowd of one hundred thousand people gathered in front of the seat of the local authorities on the

<sup>17</sup> See Machcewicz, Paweł. 1991. "Poznańska rewolta 1956 – postulaty i symbolika" [*Poznań Revolt of 1956: Postulates and Symbolism*]. *Więź*, 6 (1991): pp. 107–109.

main square (then named Stalin Square, today the Adam Mickiewicz Square). This figure represents nearly one-third of all the inhabitants of Poznań, which proves that the original workers' protest turned into a protest of the entire local populace. The lack of response from the authorities resulted in a gradual radicalization of the protest and an important stage thereof, where demonstrators took control of a car with loudspeakers and shouted slogans as well as rumors spreading among the crowd. In particular, there was one false rumor about the arrest of the Josef Stalin Metal Works delegation that was returning from negotiations with Warsaw,<sup>18</sup> so some protestors went to the prison on Młyńska Street with the intention of releasing prisoners allegedly detained there.

While a crowd gathered in the main square of Poznań to confront local authorities, another group of protesters surrounded the building of the Provincial Public Security Office in Kochanowskiego Street, which housed the headquarters of the hated secret police. The event shows that people were aware of its importance and knew that in the "People's Poland," the most important decisions were made by the committees of the party, and communist governance was based on the all-powerful security apparatus. People surrounding the building were attacked with water cannons attached to nearby fire hydrants, and retaliated by throwing stones at the windows. The next pivotal moment was at 10.40 am, when the first shots were fired out of a window on the second floor of the Security Office, which provoked further radicalization of the protestors' mood and escalated the conflict.

As mentioned earlier, the Poznań workers' protest against the economic and social situation quickly gained a political and freedom-fighting dimension, but it was in front of the building of the secret police that the demonstration turned into armed conflict.<sup>19</sup> During the protest, Poznańians acquired approximately two hundred pieces of serviceable weapons, some of which were taken from the warehouse

<sup>18</sup> Eisler, Jerzy. 2008. *"Polskie miesiące" czyli kryzys(y) w PRL* ["Polish Months" or Crises in the People's Republic of Poland]. Warsaw: Institute of National Remembrance, pp. 22–24.

<sup>19</sup> Machcewicz 1991, op. cit., pp. 107–109.

prison in Młyńska Street, the storages of universities, and disarmed militia checkpoints on the outskirts of the city and beyond. They even found firearms, which protestors used to open fire at the building of the secret police, while in other parts of the city, demonstrators used bottles filled with gasoline.

Party leadership was aware of the severity of the situation in Poznań, and since the spread of protests across the country posed a real threat to the communist regime, they dispatched enormous forces to pacify the revolt. Over 10,000 soldiers, 880 vehicles, over 350 tanks (31 of which were destroyed or damaged), 68 motorcycles, 31 assault guns, 30 armored personnel carriers, and even six anti-aircraft guns were sent to the city. The disproportionate scale of the response to this very real threat is best illustrated by the fact that during the two days of operation, soldiers fired 180,000 rounds of ammunition.<sup>20</sup> This figure is worth comparing to the number of victims, of whom at least 57 people were killed, most of whom did not take an active part in the riots, and over 600 people were injured.<sup>21</sup>

According to some historians, sending the military troops into the city meant that from the moment of their dispatch, the clashes between protestors and the armed forces could be regarded as an anti-communist uprising, whose participants consciously alluded to the symbolism of the Warsaw Uprising of 1944. The sight of young people throwing bottles at tanks had obvious connotations for many people who remembered the war. Those same patterns of behavior were revived, as evidenced by the appearance of young women serving as nurses who helped the injured. There was a belief spreading that the protest expanded beyond Poznań and spread to the whole country,

<sup>20</sup> Kajetanowicz, Jerzy. 2006. "Wojsko Polskie w wydarzeniach poznańskich 1956 roku" ['The Polish Army During the Poznań Events of 1956']. *Przegląd Historyczno-Wojskowy*, 5 (2006): p. 45; Nalepa, Edward Jan. 1992. *Pacyfikacja zbuntowanego miasta. Wojsko Polskie w Czerwcu 1956 r. w Poznaniu w świetle dokumentów wojskowych* ['Pacification of the Rebellious City: The Polish Army in June 1956. Poznań in the Light of Military Documents']. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Bellona, p. 54.

<sup>21</sup> Jastrząb, Łukasz. 2006. "Rozstrzelano moje serce w Poznaniu." *Poznański Czerwiec 1956 r. – straty osobowe i ich analiza* ["My Heart Was Shot in Poznań: Personal Losses and Their Analysis"]. Poznań: Comandor, pp. 178–182.

and the security police building was the last bastion of resistance for the communist regime.<sup>22</sup>

One of the most important tasks of each political police force during the communist regime was to control the mood and behavior of the people and neutralize the threat of a social outbreak, so an actual social outbreak happens means that the services had failed. There is one exception to the rule, however, a situation in which an outbreak or the escalation of a conflict was provoked by the services themselves. Despite several puzzling facts, such as the first shots being fired out of the seat of the security office, it seems unlikely that the Poznań events were the result of a provocation. However, historians are professionally obliged to search for causal relationships and connections, so it is no wonder that they sometimes see them where they do not exist. At the same time, as Paczkowski points out, we often underestimate the role of plain coincidence, chance, error, delay, or chaos. In this case, it seems most likely that when attacked by the demonstrators, officers felt psychologically threatened and so, under such extreme stress, they responded by firing their weapons.

The course of events in Poznań clearly proved that the communist security apparatus was not prepared to pacify mass protests and demonstrations. Thus far, its main purpose had been to fight with armed underground freedom-fighters and actual or imaginary political opponents, as well as exerting control over society through surveillance and, in the Stalinist years, mass repressions. After 1954, it turned out that there were practically no real political opponents left and the then-current policy of repression against the growing criticism was impossible to continue. In other words, the experiences gained during the Poznań outbreak would be informative of a future course of action.

It is important to note that despite the general crisis in Poland, devout communists could not wrap their heads around the idea that the working class that they supposedly represented could rise against them. There were no formations specialized in street combat, since the authorities, according to their logic, had to use the military with all its fatal consequences. However, dispatching the military was also

22 See Eisler 2008, *op. cit.*, pp. 23–25, and Machcewicz 1991, *op. cit.*

a terrible propaganda failure parallel to the one after the uprising in the German Democratic Republic in 1953, Hungary in 1956, and later Czechoslovakia in 1968. The message was that, regardless of ideological promises, the power of the communists was ultimately based on the barrels of tanks.

One of the most important lessons learned by the security apparatus after the Poznań experience was the need to prepare for the suppression of street demonstrations. Preparations included improvements in staffing, logistics, communications systems and exercise drills. Finally, the militia had to be equipped with necessary gear such as clubs, helmets, and eventually tear gas and combat vehicles. While this may seem surprising, rubber truncheons were only introduced for use in 1956. Within several months after the Poznań revolt in June, in some provinces authorities introduced guidelines for the suppression of strikes, demonstrations, and riots.

The culmination of the crisis of the security apparatus came in October and November 1956, when authorities began to fear that similarly to Hungary, the wrath of Polish society would turn against security officers and shatter the security apparatus. Many members of the new ruling elite had a negative experience with the activities of the security office or, like Władysław Gomułka, had been the victims thereof, which meant that deep organizational and personnel changes were inevitable. On November 13, 1956, the Parliament passed an act eliminating the Committee for Public Security–KBP and transferring its powers to the Ministry of the Interior. On November 29, the Minister of the Interior issued an order creating the new organizational structure of the Ministry of the Interior, confirmed on December 13 by a classified and unpublished resolution of the Council of Ministers. It defined the organizational units of the Ministry, but did not specify the scope of its activities. It was the domain of the Minister of the Interior until July 1983, when the Parliament passed a law on the office of the Minister of the Interior and the range of activities of its subordinate bodies.<sup>23</sup>

23 Frazik, Wojciech et al. 2004. *Dzieje aparatu represji w PRL (1944–1989). Stan badań* ['The History of the Apparatus of Repression in the People's Republic

The reorganization of the Ministry of the Interior involved the acquisition of all assets and structures of the KBP, both at the central and the local levels. The essence of these changes therefore boiled down to "hiding" the political police within the structures of the Ministry of the Interior at the central level, and the People's Militia at the provincial level. The organizational structure of the formally established Security Service (*Służba Bezpieczeństwa*, SB) of the Ministry of the Interior was composed of Department I (Intelligence), Department II (Counterintelligence), Department III (in charge of any "anti-state" activities, i.e. manifestations of the activity of the opposition), Bureau "A" (Ciphers), Bureau "B" (Surveillance), Bureau "T" (Operative Techniques), Bureau "W" (Monitoring Correspondence), the Government Protection Bureau, and the Bureau of Investigations of the Ministry of the Interior. The Minister of the Interior directly oversaw the Cabinet of the Minister and the Chief Inspectorate, with officers from the Security Office quickly appointed as the heads of these units. This general division proved to be relatively stable, although the divisional structure eventually evolved as it was adapted to the current needs of the system.<sup>24</sup>

In December 1956, the Council of Ministers adopted a resolution that led to the establishment of the Motorized Reinforcements of the People's Militia (*Zmotoryzowane Odwoły Milicji Obywatelskiej*, henceforth: ZOMO), which meant that the authorities were now preparing for subsequent clashes with society.<sup>25</sup> In retrospect, the change is paradoxical, since the ZOMO gained a sinister reputation and became synonymous with the repressive regime despite having been founded in order to use militia forces, not the military, in

of Poland (1944–1989): The State of Research']. Warsaw and Krakow: Institute of National Remembrance. Source: [http://ipn.gov.pl/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0005/47786/1-6310.pdf](http://ipn.gov.pl/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/47786/1-6310.pdf) accessed on July 1, 2015; Piotrowski, Paweł (ed.) 2006. *Aparat bezpieczeństwa w Polsce. Kadra kierownicza, t. 2 1956–1975* ['The Security Apparatus in Poland: Executives, Vol. 2, 1956–1975']. Warsaw: Institute for Sustainable Technologies, pp. 7–14.

<sup>24</sup> Ibidem, p. 14; Persak and Kamiński 2005, op. cit., pp. 228–229.

<sup>25</sup> See Jastrząb, Łukasz. 2011. *Milicja Obywatelska w Poznańskim Czerwcu 1956 r. Wybór źródeł* ['The People's Militia in Poznań June of 1956: Selected Sources']. Toruń: Wydawn.

confrontations with society. The first major baptism of fire for the ZOMO was in August 1957, during the suppressed tram drivers strike in Łódź. In early October 1957, they passed an even more dangerous test following the abolishment of the weekly socio-political magazine *Po prostu* ['Just'], which led to several days of rioting in the streets of Warsaw.<sup>26</sup>

After 1954, the security apparatus stopped using mass terror and repression as a tool of exercising power and control over society. Until the very end of the Polish People's Republic, large-scale repressions were employed only at times of socio-political crises, demonstrations, and street riots, such as the revolt in October 1957 after the abolishment of *Po prostu*. One exception was the introduction of martial law in December 1981, when mass-repression returned and the security apparatus focused on selective activities, surveillance, and repressions directed against specific individuals and milieus considered to be a threat to national security.

It should be emphasized that, from 1956, the PUWP exercised actual, not nominal control over the Ministry of the Interior. Even so, Władysław Wicha could remain Minister since he had gained Gomułka's trust when, at the climax in October 1956, the People's Militia forces subordinate to Wicha reported the movements of the Soviet troops. Party control over the security apparatus was reflected in the position occupied by successive Ministers of the Interior in the hierarchy of power. Apart from two exceptions, Stanisław Kowalczyk and Czesław Kiszczał, who had reached as high a rank as the member of the Politburo, most of them represented the level of a member of the Central Committee of the PUWP.

Another manifestation of Party control was a ban on recruiting secret collaborators from among members of the PUWP. The ban was included in the guidelines of 1960, later consistently repeated, and in exceptional circumstances, the consent of the First Secretary

26 Lesiakowski, Krzysztof. 2008. *Strajki robotnicze w Łodzi 1945–1976* ['Workers' Strikes in Łódź in 1945–1976']. Łódź: Institute of National Remembrance; Rokicki, Konrad. 2007. "Chrzest bojowy ZOMO" ['ZOMO and the Baptism of Fire']. *Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość*, 1: pp. 421–432.

of the appropriate Provincial Committee of the PUWP was required for recruitment. However, the Security Service did not give up on using members of the Party for its operations, and instead did so by classifying them as "operative contacts" or "working contacts," thereby waiving the obligation to sign a written declaration of cooperation.<sup>27</sup>

Day-to-day supervision of "security" was controlled by one of the secretaries of the Central Committee of the PUWP. Initially, it was Jerzy Albrecht, who identified with the liberal "Puławy" faction within the ruling elite, but in February 1969, he was replaced by Ryszard Strzelecki, a die-hard ally of Mieczysław Moczar, an ambitious Deputy Minister of the Interior.

Mieczysław Moczar was appointed to the position of Deputy Minister of the Interior on November 1, 1956, now put in charge of the Security Service. He returned to the security apparatus after his banishment in 1948, when he was classified as one of the "natives" [*krajowcy*] affiliated with Władysław Gomułka. As a born and bred security service officer, who knew the ins and outs of people and mechanisms, he had a natural advantage over Minister Wicha, whose party apparatchik background earned him the reputation of a figurehead for Deputy Minister of the Interior Antoni Alster. It is assumed that Moczar's task in the Ministry of the Interior was to watch the "Puławy" faction, while the other Deputy Minister, a very efficient apparatchik identified with the latter group, was there to observe the "Natolin" faction. In 1960, this state of relative stability was shaken when personnel changes occurred in the Ministry of the Interior and the Central Political Directorate of the Polish Army, clearly based on anti-Semitic and "anti-revisionist" bias. It is likely that this was the birth of the "guerrilla faction" within the PUWP elite, whose undisputed leader was Moczar himself.<sup>28</sup>

The "guerilla" faction of the PUWP elite was composed of members of the party and state activists with war experience in the ranks of the communist guerrilla forces, including the *Gwardia Ludowa* ['People's Guard'] and the *Armia Ludowa* ['People's Army'].

<sup>27</sup> Ibidem, p. 237.

<sup>28</sup> Szumilo 2014, op. cit., pp. 416–417.



Moczar had allies among the high-ranking officers of the military, intelligence, military counterintelligence, the Central Political Directorate of the Polish Army, and First Secretaries of Provincial Committees sympathizing with the "Natolin" faction. Gradually, they were joined by younger apparatchiks from the generation of the Union of Polish Youth (*Związek Młodzieży Polskiej*, ZMP), who were dissatisfied with pre-war communists blocking their path for advancement in the structures of power, and hoped that association with Moczar might facilitate their promotion. The "guerrillas" drew their ideas from "national communism," readily employing anti-Semitic and nationalist slogans.

The turning point in the "guerrilla" fight for influence turned out to be the suicide of Henryk Holland, a journalist arrested on December 21, 1961.<sup>29</sup> Since this was the first arrest of a distinguished communist since 1956, party activists and journalists associated with the "Puławy" faction were appalled, and few people believed that his death had been a suicide. Holland's funeral was attended by over two hundred people, including well-known journalists, scientists, and party activists representing the "Puławy" circle, which was interpreted, by Gomułka as well, as a demonstration targeted against Moczar and the Ministry of the Interior. An unplanned advantage to the "guerrillas" cause of the Holland case was Alster's resignation from the position of Deputy Minister of the Interior in May 1964, which was unanimously seen as Moczar's victory in the fight for control over the security apparatus.<sup>30</sup> By the time he became Wicha's successor as Minister of the Interior in December 1964, the security apparatus was already the "guerrillas" instrument in the struggle for power and influence among the party and government elites.

29 See Persak, Krzysztof. 2006. *Sprawa Henryka Hollanda* ['The Case of Henryk Holland']. Warsaw: Institute of National Remembrance and ISP PAN.

30 Persak, Krzysztof. 2008. "Dymisja Antoniego Alstera" ['Resignation of Antoni Alster']. In *Od Piłsudskiego do Wałęsy. Studia z dziejów Polski w XX wieku (Księga jubileuszowa prof. Andrzeja Paczkowskiego)* ['From Piłsudski to Wałęsa: Studies of Polish History in the Twentieth Century (Jubilee Book for Professor Andrzej Paczkowski)']. Warsaw: Institute of National Remembrance and Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes Against the Polish Nation, pp. 233–239.

Published resources quote several lists of numbers illustrating the scale of the reduction of personnel in the years 1954–1956. In January 1954, according to reports of the committees selecting officers for dismissal, which used a list of MBP employees, there were 32,984 officers in service: 6,290 in the headquarters, 14,930 in provincial units, and 11,764 in county units. In April 1954, there were 29,458 people employed after the first wave of layoffs: 5,535 in the headquarters, 12,780 in provincial units, and 11,143 in county units.<sup>31</sup> In 1955, the Committee for Public Security employed 20,299 people full-time. After the liquidation of the KBP and the reorganization completed in May 1957, the Security Service of the Ministry of the Interior had 9,215 full-time employees, and 8,390 registered officers. As noted by Paweł Piotrowski, the scale of reductions between November 1956 and April 1957 was very large: 9,057 officers were dismissed, which accounted for 38% of the overall personnel of the security apparatus. The administration and support staff were the ones most affected by the reductions. Criticism of the security apparatus resulted in the dismissal of persons who faced the most serious charges: twenty-three directors and deputy directors of departments and offices, ten heads and deputy heads of the Provincial Office of Public Security (*Wojewódzki Urząd Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego*, WUBP), nineteen department section heads, and thirty-two heads of sections of the WUBP. The reductions were used as an opportunity to get rid of a substantial part of officers of Jewish origin employed in managerial positions. It is interesting to note that in the years 1957–1959, 1,119 dismissed officers returned to the Security Service as a result of re-education, mainly due to inferior wages and dislike from their colleagues at their new jobs. The ranks of the Security Service gradually increased, reaching 15,070 employees in May 1975.<sup>32</sup>

Between 1950 and 1953, the overall number of secret collaborators grew at a rate of 10% per year, reaching 85,333 by the end of 1953. At the height of 1954, the number of milieus under surveillance

31 Discussion of the listed numbers can be found in Ceranka 2007, op. cit., pp. 222–223.

32 Piotrowski 2006, op. cit., pp. 8–10; Persak and Kamiński 2005, op. cit., p. 244.

reached 43, and "the register of criminal and suspicious elements" contained approximately six million names, one-third of the adult population of Poland.<sup>33</sup> As a result of the organizational changes and Światło's broadcasts, the number of secret collaborators refusing further cooperation and eliminated from the network started to grow exponentially. In 1955, 39,621 were gone, while only 4,491 collaborators were acquired to replace them. After June and October 1956, for each newly-recruited secret collaborator for a total of 992, more than ten were removed from the register for a total of 10,302. In 1960, after another verification of the network of agents, the number of secret collaborators dropped to the lowest level in the entire People's Republic era, amounting to a mere 8,720. In the early 1960's, the number of secret collaborators was stabilized but began to rise from 1966, in connection with the confrontation between the state and the Church, student demonstrations in March 1968, and the revolt in Northern Poland in 1970. Consequently, in the entire decade of 1964–1974, the number of secret collaborators doubled. After 1976, a significant growth was observed, especially in 1981, when the growth reached nearly 30% a year and the growth rate was comparable to that of the early 1950's. Admittedly, we could not determine the number of secret collaborators after 1984, but we can assume that it exceeded the level from 1953.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Paczkowski 1996, op. cit., p. 259.

<sup>34</sup> Ruzikowski, Tadeusz. 2003. "Tajni współpracownicy pionów operacyjnych aparatu bezpieczeństwa 1950–1984" ["Secret Collaborators of the Operative Sections of the Security Apparatus, 1950–1984"]. *Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość*, 1 (2003): pp. 115–118.



## Finding a Way: State Security in the Period of Rudolf Barák, 1953–1961

Stalin's death at the beginning of March 1953 affected the situation of the entire Eastern Bloc, including Czechoslovakia, where only a few days after returning from Stalin's funeral, Klement Gottwald, President of Czechoslovakia and chairman of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (*Komunistická Strana Československa*, KSČ, henceforth: CSCP), died as well. Gottwald became an icon and an undisputable leader to the Czechoslovak communists, around whom a cult of personality was created after World War II based on the model of the Soviet leader.<sup>1</sup> There was no one in the leading organs who enjoyed the same reputation and would be able to smoothly replace him. The next day after Gottwald's funeral, the Politburo of the Central Committee of the CSCP decided that the chairman of the National Assembly, Antonín Zápotocký, would become the new president of the Republic. After a long discussion, the post of the Chairman of the Communist Party was also dissolved, and the secretary of the Central Committee of the CSCP, Antonín Novotný, was put in charge of the Central Secretariat (this post was later called the First Secretary). In this way, the leading state and party functions were divided, though they were later reunited after Zápotocký's death in 1957, when Novotný was elected president.

<sup>1</sup> Kaplan, Karel and Kosátek, Pavel. 2004. *Gottwaldovi muži* ['Gottwald's Men']. Litomyšl: Paseka, pp. 45–46.

The political changes that followed Stalin and Gottwald's death can be regarded as merely the culmination of the long-running crisis of the Czechoslovak communist regime.<sup>2</sup> An economic plan approved after February 1948 imposed unreasonable demands on the Czechoslovak economy, such as cutting traditional economic ties with Western Europe, intensification of the militarization of state and society, the elimination of "the remnants of the exploitative class," and forced collectivization, which caused chaos in the economy. This development was accompanied by major social changes as well, as social destabilization brought the disruption of the power-political structure fueled by mass injustice, primarily political trials of senior representatives of the communist party and a subsequent mass purge within the party. Leading communist organs were also becoming more dependent on the State Security Services (*Štátní Bezpečnost*, ŠtB), which informed them about the situation in society<sup>3</sup> and then launched a wave of violence against the regime's adversaries, actual and potential. Thanks to a net of secret collaborators, provocateurs and tapping devices, the State Security Services seemed to be omnipresent.<sup>4</sup> The public terror culminated

2 For more details on the crisis of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia in that time, see Kaplan, Karel. 1993. *Sociální souvislosti krizí komunistického režimu v letech 1953–1957 a 1968–1975* [Social Aspects of the Crises of the Communist Regime in the Years 1953–1957 and 1968–1975]. Prague: Centrum orální historie ÚSD AV ČR; Pernes, Jiří. 2008. *Krise komunistického režimu v Československu v 50. letech 20. století* [Crisis of the Communist Regime in Czechoslovakia in the 1950s]. Brno: Center for the Study of Democracy and Culture; Pernes, Jiří. 2000. *Snahy o překonání politicko-hospodářské krize v Československu v roce 1953* [Efforts to Overcome the Political-Economic Crisis in Czechoslovakia in 1953]. Brno: ÚSD AV ČR.

3 Kaplan and Kosatík claim that Gottwald's voluntary isolation and his almost ignoring of contacts with other party members were a result of the fact that in the new situation, it was not the information about the party's internal life but the information supplied by the security that was politically decisive. Kaplan and Kosatík 2004, op. cit., p. 50.

4 In 1952, Gottwald discovered a tapping device in his flat in the Prague castle. He personally suspected the Soviet intelligence service of installing it, but it was impossible to learn more details. Kaplan and Kosatík 2004, op. cit., pp. 60–61.

during arrests among the leading officials of the communist party, when even Gottwald himself felt unsafe.<sup>5</sup>

At the end of 1951, restrictive measures imposed on the working class led to strikes in the industry, which resulted in mass unrests in Brno.<sup>6</sup> Strikes were also becoming more frequent in other companies and mines, primarily in the Ostrava and Kladno regions. On March 7, 1953, a bomb attack was carried out in Hostinné in Eastern Bohemia against the Secretariat of the Town Committee of the CSCP, in connection with Stalin's death and the birth anniversary of the first Czechoslovak president, T. Garrigue Masaryk. Consequently, Stalin's portraits with defaming inscriptions and glorifying pictures of Masaryk and former Prime Minister Edvard Beneš were hung up all over the town.<sup>7</sup> In April of the same year, hundreds of people went to the streets in Prostějov in Central Moravia after Masaryk's statue had been blown up.<sup>8</sup> In May, a massive strike broke out in the workrooms of the Czechoslovak railways in Česká Lípa in North Bohemia.<sup>9</sup> All these events were local and had a limited effect, so they could not disrupt the monopoly of communist power. However, they were a warning to the leading party officials, and the regime responded to the unrests by repression and the reinforcement of the security apparatus.<sup>10</sup> In Spring of 1953, forced collectivization reached its peak, with a massive displacement of families of the "village rich men" carried out

5 Kaplan and Kosátek 2004, op. cit., p. 51; Knapp, Viktor. 1998. *Přeměny času. Vzpomínky nestora české právní vědy* ['Changes of Time: Memories of a Doyen of the Czech Legal Science']. Prague: PROSPEKTRUM, p. 100.

6 For more details, see Pernes, Jiří. 1997. *Brno 1951. Příspevek k dějinám protikomunistického odporu na Moravě* ['Brno 1951: Contributions to the History of the Anti-Communist Resistance in Moravia']. Prague: ÚSD AV ČR.

7 Archives of the State Security Services (*Archiv bezpečnostních složek*, henceforth: ABS, Arch.) 323, inventory unit (henceforth: 'inv. u.') 323-24-5. "Terror Hostinné – action 'Town Committee' – final report." March 12, 1953.

8 Bárta, Milan. 2013. "Akce 'Prostějov'. Odstranění sochy T. G. Masaryka v Prostějově v dubnu 1953" ['Operation "Prostějov": The April 1953 Removal of T. G. Masaryk's Statue in Prostějov']. *Paměť a dějiny*, 3 (2013): pp. 47–57; Trapl, Miloš. 1999. *Osudy sochy* ['Fates of a Statue']. Prostějov: Radnice Prostějov.

9 ABS, Arch. A2/1, inv. u. 485. "Report on the strike in the workrooms of the Czechoslovak railways in Česká Lípa." May 8, 1953.

10 Pernes 2008, op. cit., p. 71.

under "action K(ulak)."<sup>11</sup> A censorship organ called the Main Press Monitoring Directorate was established,<sup>12</sup> authorities issued arrests and investigations of people suspected of anti-state activities, the campaign against Tito's Yugoslavia escalated,<sup>13</sup> and a state of emergency was repeatedly announced for members of the People's Militias and security services on different occasions such as official events, state holidays, or travels of the President of the Republic.

On June 1, 1953, leadership implemented a currency reform that sparked a major unrest across Czechoslovakia. The currency reform had been secretly prepared with the help of the Soviet Union well before Gottwald's death in March. It was supposed to be a solution to the economic crisis, and party organs, state security and the police were supposed to play an important role in its implementation.<sup>14</sup> During the reform, the Security focused on protecting exchange points where banknotes were being exchanged in the ratio of 5:1 up to 50:1. These exchange points, however, remained peaceful – the main unrest actually occurred in factories and consequently spilled onto the streets. According to statistical data collected by the Ministry of National Security, a total of 129 factories and 32,359 employees went on strike. Plzeň witnessed the largest disturbances with protesting workers occupying the center of the city, the Town

11 For more details, see Jech, Karel. 2008. *Kolektivizace a vyhánění sedláků z půdy* ['Collectivization and the Expulsion of Farmers from the Land']. Prague: Vyšehrad, pp. 183–189; Kaplan, Karel. 2012. *Proměny české společnosti 1948–1960. Část druhá Venkov* ['Changes of Czech Society in 1948–1960, Part 2: Country']. Prague: ÚSD AV ČR, pp. 364–365.

12 For more details, see Kaplan, Karel and Tomášek, Dušan. 1994. *O cenzuře v Československu v letech 1945–1956* ['On Censorship in Czechoslovakia in 1945–1956']. Prague: ÚSD AV ČR.

13 For more details, see Bárta, Milan. 2011. "Akce Jugoslávie. Státní bezpečnost v boji proti 'agentům titoismu' v letech 1948–1955" ['Operation Yugoslavia: State Security in the Fight Against the "Agents of Titoism" in 1948–1955']. *Paměť a dějiny*, 1 (2011): p. 73.

14 For more details, see Jirásek, Zdeněk and Šůla, Jaroslav. 1992. *Velká peněžní loupež v Československu 1953 aneb 50:1* ['The Great 1953 Money Robbery in Czechoslovakia, or Fifty to One']. Prague: Svítání; Petráš, Jiří. 2005. "Peněžní reforma 1953" ['Currency Reform']. *Sborník archivu ministerstva vnitra*, 3 (2005): p. 149.



Hall, the court, and the prison for several hours. It was not until the evening that police, the People's Militias and the Border Guard squads managed to quell the riots. The workers' expressions of discontent with the reforms were not politically motivated, but primarily stemmed from disappointment arising from the social insensitivity of party and state decisions. On June 6, 1953, leadership called off full emergency for all members of the Ministry of National Security in connection with the currency reform.<sup>15</sup> However, soon afterwards, security forces were put on alert in connection with events unfolding in the German Democratic Republic, while they were also placed on standby due to the impending threat of more mass disturbances. Once the uprest was suppressed, participants faced harsh punishment for their involvement in the protests as the newly elected President Zápotocký called for exemplary punishment of the culprits. Hundreds of people were arrested. In July 1953, 217 people were tried and sentenced in Plzeň, with prison sentences ranging from six months to fourteen years.<sup>16</sup>

While communist leadership inflicted harsh punishment on the participants of the Plzeň unrest, major purges were prevented by the disapproval of the leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, which feared further complications in Czechoslovakia's domestic affairs and therefore recommended leniency and certain reform measures. Soviet leadership in general sought to resolve the situation in the Eastern Bloc, where aside from Czechoslovakia, East Germany and Hungary also faced unrests provoked by appalling living conditions.<sup>17</sup> We could say that changes in the power structure and military policies of the USSR after the death of Stalin and the softening of the Cold War became momentous for correcting the economic and social policies of the CSCP.<sup>18</sup>

15 ABS, Arch. A6/3, inv. u. 377. "Secret Order of the Minister of National Security No. 93 of June 6, 1953. Security measures of the Ministry of National Security." June 6, 1953.

16 Tomek, Prokop. 2009. *Život a doba ministra Rudolfa Baráka* ['The Life and Times of Minister Rudolf Barák']. Prague: Vyšehrad, p. 29.

17 Pernes 2008, op. cit., pp. 93–95.

18 Kaplan 1993, op. cit., p. 16.

Under the influence of the Soviet "New Course," communist leadership in Prague began to abandon the policy of harsh measures against "hostile elements." On August 1, President Zápotocký declared that administrative pressure must not be used in the course of creating unified agricultural cooperatives, and announced that the government and the leadership of the CSCP would not hinder anyone from leaving the cooperatives.<sup>19</sup> Leadership also stopped further interventions against the Catholic Church.

Despite following the Soviet New Course, leading officials in Czechoslovakia were unable to openly acknowledge the flaws of the regime, nor did they have the courage to start reforms, so all measures were restricted to the economic sphere. However, slowing down the development of the heavy and armaments industries, accelerating the growth of the production of consumer goods, reducing retail prices, and supporting the development of agriculture and services and the corresponding allocation of investments resulted in an increase in the living standards of the population, and consequently in the pacification of the domestic situation.<sup>20</sup>

Due to the New Course, security forces had undergone major structural changes to follow the Soviet model. In September 1953, the Ministry of National Security and the Ministry of the Interior were merged, and on September 14, 1953, the ambitious and able Rudolf Barák was appointed Minister of the Interior.<sup>21</sup> Barák was born in May 1915 to a working class family in Blansko in Southern Moravia near Brno, where he was trained as a printer and worked as a workman in the Brno region. During the war, he became a member of the illegal

19 For more details on changes in the execution of agricultural policies in 1953, see Jech 2008, op. cit., pp. 190–206; Urban, Jiří. 2012. "Československá cesta kolektivizace venkova po Stalinově a Gottwaldově smrti: od mezinárodních souvislostí k místním praktikám" ['The Czechoslovak Way of Collectivization after Stalin and Gottwald's Death: From International Situation to Local Practices']. In *Prameny a studie 48: Z historie zemědělství* ['Sources and Studies 48: The History of Agriculture']. Prague: Národní zemědělské muzeum, pp. 92–115.

20 Pernes 2000, op. cit., p. 18.

21 For more details on Rudolf Barák, see Tomek, Prokop. 2005. "Život a doba ministra vnitra Rudolfa Baráka" ['The Life and Times of Minister of the Interior Rudolf Barák']. *Securitas Imperii*, 12 (2005): pp. 329–362; Tomek 2009, op. cit.

organization of the communist party, then got involved in political and party activities on a regional level in Southern Moravia after the liberation of Czechoslovakia. He penetrated the party hierarchy after certain purges within the CSCP that culminated in the arrest of General Secretary Rudolf Slánský. In December 1952, Barák became the candidate of the Central Committee of the CSCP, and in March 1953, he was entrusted with the office of Deputy Prime Minister.<sup>22</sup>

Less than a year after Rudolf Barák was appointed Deputy Prime Minister, he also became a member of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the CSCP. This combination of high-ranking party and state posts granted him a strong political position and *de facto* uncontrollability, which basically enabled him to ignore the efforts of the Department of State Administration of the Central Committee of the CSCP to participate in controlling the Ministry of the Interior. Barák himself was by no means a reformist – on the contrary, he soon understood the true advantages of his position. He sided with officials who promoted harsh measures and solutions within party leadership, and under his leadership, State Security assumed an extremely strict control over society.<sup>23</sup>

Barák was in charge of a large apparatus that affected the whole of Czechoslovak society. In November 1953, the Ministry of the Interior had almost one hundred thousand employees at the central apparatus and regional offices, along with approximately 45,000 soldiers of the Border Guard and Home Guard, 2,500 soldiers of the Civil Defense, 26,000 members of public security, 13,000 members of State Security, 8,000 members of the Correctional Facilities Corps, and more than 5,000 civilian staff. About 85% of them were members of the CSCP,

22 Kalous, Jan et al. 2009. *Biografický slovník představitelů ministerstva vnitra v letech 1948–1989. Ministři a jejich náměstci* [A Biographic Encyclopedia of Representatives of the Ministry of the Interior in 1948–1989: Ministers and Their Deputies]. Prague: Ústav pro studium totalitních režimů, pp. 45–48.

23 Kalous, Jan. 2014. "Rok 1953 v životě ministerstva národní bezpečnosti a ministerstva vnitra" [The Year 1953 in the Life of the Ministry of National Security and the Ministry of the Interior]. In Petráš, Jiří and Svoboda, Libor (eds.) *Osm let po válce. Rok 1953 v Československu* [Eight Years after the War: The Year 1953 in Czechoslovakia]. Prague: ISTR, p. 24.

but the ratio among senior officers was almost 99%. Following the communist coup in February, purges were carried out within the security forces, where "political reliability" became the decisive factor in admission instead of experience or education. By May 1954, out of the thousands of ministry employees, only 198 persons had a university degree (2.2%), and 513 persons had a high school diploma (5.7%). The situation was even worse on the regional level, where only 1% of officers had graduated from high school or university, while 31% had not even completed primary school education.<sup>24</sup> Efforts to improve the situation were slow and did not bring immediate results, since the situation was supposed to be improved by studying at specialized KGB schools in the Soviet Union. By February 1961, 337 people had completed a one-year school (with twenty-nine still studying), while a total of forty-six persons had completed a two-year school for intelligence staff.<sup>25</sup>

One of Barák's main tasks was to bring the State Security Services under the control of the communist party in order to make it easier to manage. At the same time, the role of the communist party in the organs of the Ministry of the Interior was to be strengthened. The new guidelines of the Central Committee of the CSCP for the work of organizations underlined the importance of political education, and stipulated that one main central committee, with competences of a regional committee of the party, and subordinate directly to the Central Committee of the CSCP, shall be in charge of the party organs at the Ministry.<sup>26</sup> In December 1953, at the gathering of the commanders and political workers of the Ministry of the Interior, Barák said that "every communist works under the control of the party, and so do we (...) Our connection with the party must be vivid and concrete. The cooperation between the party organs and the departments of the Ministry of the Interior must indeed deepen." He

24 Koudelka, František. 1993. *Státní bezpečnost 1954–1968 (Základní údaje)* [State Security, 1954–1968 (Basic Data)]. Prague: ÚSD AV ČR, pp. 37, 42.

25 Ibidem, p. 43.

26 ABS, Arch. A2/1, inv. u. 139. "Speech by the comrade minister at the gathering of the commanders and political workers of the Ministry of the Interior." December 10, 1953.

then added at the end of this speech that "all manner of superiority of security organs over the party, which had been promoted and realized by traitors within state security, is a crime against the party. It is unacceptable and it must be subdued at once, at all costs."<sup>27</sup>

To keep tight control, leadership decided to reduce the scope of activities of the Ministry of the Interior and relegate part of its tasks to the central bodies of state administration. In November 1953, they published "Rules of the People's Militias," which removed the People's Militias from under the National Security Corps and the Ministry of the Interior and placed them under the direct control of the Central Committee of the CSCP, where an independent department was in charge of its activities, with the chairman of the CSCP acting as Chief Commander (later on it was the First or General Secretary of the Central Committee of the CSCP, respectively, as the Head of the Party). In regions and districts, the activities of militias were controlled by the regional and district commanders, which placed decision-making on the deployment of the militias fully in the competence of party organs, and while they fulfilled their duties, the members of the People's Militias had the same rights and obligations as members of the National Security Corps. In the second half of 1953, militia commandos were created, which received quality modern arms and riot gear in preference. They were designed for quick action in case of violations of the public order, which was undoubtedly inspired by experience with the suppression of the currency reform riots at the beginning of June 1953.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, at the end of 1953, national committees were removed from the competence of the Ministry of the Interior and were thereafter subordinate directly to the government.

Party leadership and the security forces feared a possible recurrence of rioting and made preparations accordingly. After assessing the consequences of the currency reform, the political secretariat ordered the Ministry of National Security to elaborate concrete plans for the

<sup>27</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>28</sup> Bašta, Jiří. 2008. "Lidové milice – nelegální armáda KSČ" ["The People's Militia: The Illegal Army of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia"]. *Paměť a dějiny*, 2 (2008): p. 103.

liquidation of potentially extensive riots. In March 1954, the final draft of the plan, prepared in advance at the Ministry of the Interior, was submitted to the political secretariat. According to the plan, the commanders of the regional directorates of the National Security Corps were to cooperate with People's Militias as well as political and mass organizations. Concerning preventive measures, a considerable role was assigned to an agency that was to assist in monitoring the situation among the population and warn about potential unrests. After riots broke out, armed forces of the Ministry of the Interior, assisted by Border Guard and Home Guard squads, were to act in cooperation with the People's Militias and, in extreme cases, with the Armed Forces.<sup>29</sup> These plans had several variants as well: the first one envisaged strikes and unrest occurring in a single location (such as a single factory); a second version concerned an unrest spreading to an entire plant or town; the third version involved violence spilling onto the streets; and the fourth assumed a violent uprising. The permission to use extreme measures such as armaments, combat gas and tanks, was granted solely by the central staff created at the Central Committee of the CSCP, which was composed of the leading secretary of the Central Committee of the CSCP, A. Novotný, Minister of National Defence A. Čepička, and Minister of the Interior R. Barák. At the same time, Novotný was asked to prepare plans for regional political actions in case of a breach of peace and order.

The repression of the adversaries of the Czechoslovak communist leadership continued, not only by means of force but also in the form of political show trials. In the course of 1953 and 1954, Slánský trials were finally coming to a close, but at a time when in neighboring states, political processes were undergoing revision, Czechoslovakia unleashed a new wave of political trials involving employees of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, economists, State Security officers and Slovak "bourgeois-nationalists". For instance, Gustáv Husák, who would become president in the "normalization" era, was sentenced to several years of imprisonment. Some of the victims received

<sup>29</sup> ABS, Arch. A2/1, inv. u. 631. "Ensuring public order in case of counterrevolutionary provocations." March 22, 1954.

capital punishment, such as former State Security commander Osvald Závodský, who was executed in 1954. These political trials and executions continued throughout the 1950's and usually involved conscious and active adversaries of the regime, such as cross-border agents or collaborators of the Western secret services. The last person to be executed in communist Czechoslovakia for political reasons was Vladivoj Tomek in 1960.<sup>30</sup>

Upon the establishment of the new Ministry of the Interior, instead of a unified State Security led by one commander, nine independent directorates as well as independent departments were created. Their management was shared by the Minister and his Deputy Ministers, but in terms of control, the Minister had ultimate power.<sup>31</sup> The organizational structure of State Security organs created at the turn of 1953 remained largely intact until the mid-1960's. In April 1955, a special directorate was established, which was responsible for maintaining coded connection between the Ministry of the Interior and other ministries and central organs. In November 1955, two departments became independent, both of which worked in cooperation with other countries of the Soviet Bloc. One was radio intelligence (Special Department V), which searched for radio connections of agents of foreign intelligence services with their Western headquarters, and the other was radio defense (Special Department VI), which was charged with the task of intercepting the radio transmissions of Western radio stations. Regardless of partial changes, however, the main focus of the security forces remained the same. Security issues were of the utmost importance, primarily state security, including personnel, financial and material issues. The changes were for the most part external, as evidenced by the fact that a secret order of Minister of National Security Karol Bacílek,

<sup>30</sup> For more details on political trials in Czechoslovakia, see Kaplan, Karel and Paleček, Pavel. 2001. *Komunistický režim a politické procesy v Československu* ['The Czechoslovak Communist Regime and Political Trials']. Brno: Barrister & Principal; Pernes, Jiří and Foitzik, Jan (eds.) 2005. *Politické procesy v Československu po roce 1945 a "případ Slánský"* ['Political Trials in Czechoslovakia after 1945 and the "Slánský Case"']. Brno: ÚSD AV ČR, Prius.

<sup>31</sup> Koudelka 1993, op. cit., pp. 17–21.

Secret Order no. 138 of September 12, 1953 was followed (without renumbering) by a secret order of Minister of the Interior R. Barák, Secret Order no. 139 of September 22 of the same year.<sup>32</sup>

With a gradual thawing of the Czechoslovak political situation, leadership initiated changes in the security policy and the penal system. The number of people prosecuted for serious political crimes gradually declined in 1956 and 1957 as a result of developments in the Soviet Union. In 1953, 18,312 people were convicted for political crimes; in 1960, that number fell to 3,840. In 1954, State Security monitored about 50,000 people, but by 1960, their numbers decreased to around 35,000. The number of state security officers also declined, so by 1960, there were less than 10,000 officers at the State Security Services.

Despite all changes to security policy, the counterintelligence activities of State Security continued to focus primarily on the "enemy within" and the control of society. While the number of state security officers decreased, the number of state security collaborators increased, since Minister Barák promoted the idea that each operative worker should have eight to ten secret collaborators. In 1954, new guidelines on work with secret collaborators came into effect, which stipulated that the agency was a prominent weapon in the fight against the class enemy. Upon the creation of a unified central registry in July 1954, 24,480 collaborators were registered. By the end of the year, registrations rose to 30,307, and in December 1955, their numbers reached 37,972. In the same year, however, cooperation with more than 13,000 collaborators was terminated. In 1956, their number dropped by 25%, to 28,412, primarily due to developments in the USSR and neighboring socialist states. In the years 1958–1960, the number of state security collaborators increased once again due to the tightening of the regime, and in the early 1960's, the number started

<sup>32</sup> Frolík, Jan. 2002. "Ještě k nástinu organizačního vývoje státobezpečnostních složek sboru národní bezpečnosti v letech 1948–1989" ['More on the Outline of the Organizational Development of the State Security Organs of the National Security Corps in 1948–1989']. In *Sborník archivních prací 2* ['Collection of Archival Work 2']. Prague: Archives of the Administration of the Ministry of the Interior, p. 390.



to decrease in connection with a gradual liberalization of the regime that culminated during the Prague Spring in 1968.<sup>33</sup>

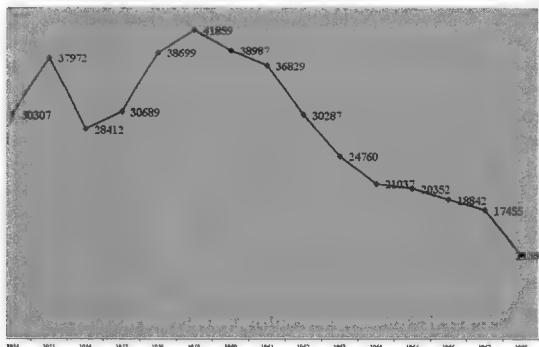


Image 1. Number of Secret State Security Collaborators, 1954–1968

Regarding counterintelligence and collaboration, agents were divided into several categories. The most capable among secret collaborators were *agents* able to penetrate the intelligence organs of the enemy, and as such were supposed to be used for deployment in specific cases. *Informants* were supposed to provide information about hostile persons in their immediate environment, while *residents* managed the work of other secret collaborators and were recruited exclusively from tested and experienced agents, informants, or former employees of the Ministry of the Interior. *Confidants* were citizens who were not bound by the oath of collaboration and who gave different types of information regarding their surroundings. They were to be recruited based on incriminating material, patriotic motivation or material benefits, such as pecuniary or other awards. Appointments

<sup>33</sup> Koudelka 1993, op. cit., pp. 52–53.

with agents either took place in conspirative apartments that were officially rented in the name of a collaborator or an employee of the Ministry of the Interior, or borrowed flats, which were private apartments rented by State Security for a definite period of time.

All things considered, the era of Rudolf Barák was one of the most successful periods for the intelligence service. One of the reasons was that the Soviet Union initiated a reduction in the number of Soviet security advisors. In the mid 1950's, there were fifty advisors, but by the early 1960's, only ten remained, most of whom were involved in intelligence. Another reason was that intelligence, until then remarkably unstable and lackluster, became the preferred body of the State Security Services. It was chiefly focused on NATO states, primarily the United States and the Federal German Republic, but priorities also included exiled groups and organizations, and what was dubbed "ideological diversion." The Czechoslovak intelligence organization was modeled after and highly dependent on the Soviet KGB, but in return, Soviet agents headed for Europe via Czechoslovakia and many Soviet agents were granted asylum in Republic of Czechoslovakia after they had been forced to leave Western countries, the most famous being Trotsky's murderer, Jaimes Ramon Mercader in 1960. Based on the Soviet model, authorities established a "scientific and technical intelligence" specializing in industrial espionage, as well as an "illegal intelligence," whereby agents with false identities were sent as sleepers to different countries to carry out tasks if a military conflict were to arise. The intelligence service also kidnapped former Czechoslovak citizens and brought them back to Czechoslovakia (including former non-communist politician and minister Bohumil Laušman, former commander of the Ukrainian insurgents Nikifor Horbanjuk,<sup>34</sup> and Dieter Koniecki, a student from Western Germany), or carried out assassinations, such as the attempted bomb attack against André Tremereaud, the Prefect of Strasbourg.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>34</sup> It also planned the abduction of Stepan Bandera, leader of the Ukrainian nationalists; however, the KGB assassinated him two days before the planned action.

<sup>35</sup> Tomek 2009, *op. cit.*, pp. 39–63.

The leadership of the Communist Party was well aware that the state security services spiraled out of their control in the past with plans to dominate the party, and so they did not dare criticize the work of State Security in depth. State Security was no longer tasked with carrying out serious violations of law but focused instead on preventive measures, but these partial changes must not be overestimated. The leadership of the CSCP did not dare criticize the work of state security in the previous era or review show trials until 1955–1957, when the “Barák Commission” (named after the Minister who was in charge of it) began to carefully review certain political trials of the early 1950’s, uncover breaches of legal principle and search for culprits. They only modified sentences and granted rehabilitation in a few cases, all of which concerned the trials of communists. Only two of the most compromised state security investigators received short-term sentences, while a few others were either transferred to other positions or dismissed.<sup>36</sup> At the same time, Minister Barák covered up the activities of his subordinates to avoid further scrutiny. Although in neighboring countries, revisions of political trials had been initiated, the Czechoslovak party leadership saw this as harmful, so the number of dismissed people was very small and their return to civilian life remained hidden. CSCP leadership tried to avoid changes that might entail an assessment of the previous years of communist rule, as well as reconsider the role of Stalin and Gottwald and the effort to prevent any changes in the highest party organs.

As mentioned above, leading officials of the communist party, who were very often involved in the injustices of previous years, were unable to acknowledge the flaws of the regime, so any reforms of the political system were limited to the economic sphere. However, these reforms contributed greatly to the pacification of Czechoslovak domestic affairs,<sup>37</sup> and the improved economic situation contributed to the fact that Czechoslovakia remained to a large extent untouched by the symptoms of the crisis of the communist system in 1956.

36 Kaplan, Karel. 2002. *StB o sobě. Výpověď vyšetřovatele Bohumila Doubka* [‘The State Security Services about Themselves: Testimony of Investigator Bohumil Doubek’]. Prague: ÚDV, pp. 35–37.

37 Pernes 2008, op. cit., pp. 124–127, 148–149.

Under the influence of Khrushchev's speech about the Stalinist cult of personality delivered at the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU, a gradual de-Stalinization and liberation began in the countries of the Soviet Bloc. The events in Poland and Hungary were positively received by the public, but for their part, the leadership of the CSCP was silent on the situation and tried to subdue the reformist movement as they watched the developments in both countries with increasing concern. They particularly feared writers, students, and intellectuals, whose demands for reforms were growing increasingly louder.

A day after the first unrest broke out in Budapest, the Politburo of the Central Committee of the CSCP discussed the situation in Hungary as well as their course of action in the matter. The Minister of the Interior delivered a report of the events and immediately ordered his subordinates to be in the state of highest alert in following the operative situation. Barák declared a partial state of emergency, primarily in Slovakia, where cross-border travel between both countries were restricted to urgent cases, and ordered the maximum activation of the network of secret collaborators, which was supposed to submit information on possible anti-state activities and the situation in Hungary and Poland. Regional commanders sent reports to the headquarters of the Ministry on a daily basis,<sup>38</sup> while Deputy Ministers of the Interior travelled to the most exposed areas (Bratislava, Košice, Ostrava and the border with Hungary) to manage local security measures. In Bratislava, a special security staff was established in order to supervise the security activities on the Hungarian-Czechoslovak border. At the same time, security carried out a frantic recruitment of people who spoke Hungarian. From October 23 to November 19, 1956, a total of 420 persons were detained at the border and the majority of them were returned to Hungary.<sup>39</sup>

38 ABS, Arch. A6/3, inv. u. 1047. "Secret Order of the Minister of the Interior No. 105 of October 24, 1956. Alertness and capacity of action of the organs of the Ministry of the Interior in connection with the events in Poland and Hungary." October 24, 1956.

39 ABS, Arch. A2/1, inv. u. 234. "Report on the readiness and moral political state of the organs of the Ministry of the Interior at the time of extraordinary measures in connection with the events in Hungary and Egypt." December 7, 1956.

Following the decision of the highest bodies of the CSCP, on October 27 and 28, the anniversary of the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic, the Ministry of the Interior declared a state of emergency for all security bodies and intensified its patrol activity.<sup>40</sup> On October 27, officers of the Ministry of the Interior, following a report submitted by a "conscious citizen," arrested a group of persons led by Ladislav Trpálek from Prague that, in their view, was planning a demonstration for the following day to spark a general uprising. The participants were supposed to arrive at their destination armed with nothing but stones.<sup>41</sup> Reports from subsequent days refer to a number of disturbances, with students allegedly being the most radical participants. Smaller unrests were reported on October 28 and November 7 (the anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution), which security resolved without delay.<sup>42</sup> On November 20, Minister Barák thanked his subordinates for successfully handling the situation,<sup>43</sup> and in December, the strengthened protection of the border with Hungary was gradually withdrawn.<sup>44</sup> The situation was successfully handled by means of preventive measures, political action and a propaganda campaign, primarily by emphasizing the acts of violence committed during the Hungarian revolution.<sup>45</sup>

Due to the efforts of State Security, there was little response in Czechoslovakia to the events of 1956. The late 1950's saw the revival

<sup>40</sup> ABS, Arch. A6/3, inv. u. 1049. "Secret Order of the Minister of the Interior No. 107 of October 26, 1956. Measures on October 27–28, 1956."

<sup>41</sup> ABS, Arch. A2/1, inv. u. 1046. "Arrest of a group who prepared an anti-state demonstration on October 28, 1956." November 5, 1956.

<sup>42</sup> Blaive, Muriel. 2001. *Promarněná příležitost. Československo a rok 1956* [A Missed Opportunity: Czechoslovakia and the Year 1956]. Prague: Prostor, pp. 99–101.

<sup>43</sup> ABS, Arch. A6/3, inv. u. 1070. "Secret Order of the Minister of the Interior No. 128 of November 20, 1956. Measures connected with the counterrevolution in Hungary." November 20, 1956.

<sup>44</sup> ABS, Arch. A6/3, inv. u. 1074. "Secret Order of the Minister of the Interior No. 132 of December 1, 1956. Measures taken in order to protect the Czechoslovakian-Hungarian state border." December 1, 1956; ABS, Arch. A6/3, inv. u. 1082. "Secret Order of the Minister of the Interior No. 140 of December 20, 1956. Cancellation of extraordinary measures at the Czechoslovakian-Hungarian state border." December 20, 1956.

<sup>45</sup> Blaive 2001, op. cit., pp. 294–299.

of Stalinists led by President Antonín Novotný, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the CSCP, and another round of political purges, after which Minister Barák issued an order in January 1959 to establish a registry of "former people." This was primarily aimed at persons who were wealthy or politically active non-Communists before February 1948, and by the end of the year, about 87,000 persons were registered.<sup>46</sup>

At the end of the 1950's, the communist regime in Czechoslovakia seemed to finally stabilize. Adversaries of the regime were practically eliminated as they were either in prison, under political surveillance or had fled the country, while the majority of society sank into resignation. At a session of the Central Committee of the CSCP in September 1959, Novotný announced the victory of socialism in Czechoslovakia, adding that only a small number of emigrants and their domestic lackeys continued to carry out anti-state activities. In June 1960, the National Assembly approved a new constitution that defined the country as a socialist state, which was reflected in the changed name of the state and the new national emblem. In June 1961, following his disagreements with Novotný, the over-ambitious Barák was dismissed as Minister of the Interior, and then dismissed again as Deputy Prime Minister in February 1962. In April 1962, Barák was sentenced to fifteen years of imprisonment for financial speculation,<sup>47</sup> and with his downfall, another era in the history of the State Security in Czechoslovakia came to an end.

The communist regime in Czechoslovakia was based on the idea that state security was a weapon of the party and therefore should be directly under the control of the CSCP. In practice, this meant that the activities of State Security were controlled by neither the legislative bodies nor the government, which only formally dealt with security or military issues. The activities of the security apparatus were primarily initiated by order of the CSCP. Despite the reorganization, the year 1953 did not bring any major changes in the activities of state security

<sup>46</sup> Koudelka 1993, op. cit., p. 90.

<sup>47</sup> In 1968, the execution of punishment was interrupted. He later worked as a workman and never succeeded to return to politics.

organs. In fact, changes were only initiated in the years 1956 and 1957 in the wake of the changing political situation following the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU. Since the CSCP was very reserved about possible criticism of the development before 1953, they announced the "New Course" only reluctantly and under the pressure of the events happening in the Soviet Union, and even then limited reforms to the economic sphere. In other words, the cautious de-Stalinization that had begun in Czechoslovakia finished before it actually started.

Changes brought on by the New Course did conclude an era of serious breaches of legal principle committed by state security, but neither the CSCP nor the Ministry of the Interior carried out a deeper analysis of the activities and position of the State Security Services. Save for a few exceptions, victims were not rehabilitated and culprits went unpunished. In the early 1960's, when socialism was announced in Czechoslovakia, State Security had the biggest number of collaborators within its agency network by far, with tens of thousands of people registered and under their control. Focus shifted from uncovering hostile activities towards less serious criminal activities such as sedition, defamation of the Republic and its representatives, defamation of the states of the World Socialist System, or fleeing the Republic. However, due to the partial democratization and liberalization of the regime, the number of political criminal sanctions fell in the 1960's. Domestic intelligence, which dealt with information about activities of the adversaries of the regime, was now put more at the forefront. State security, too, was transforming from a means of mass repression to a means of blanket political control of the most sensitive aspects of social life and intensive control over selected individuals or groups that the regime considered hostile. Leadership seemingly overcame the crisis of the early 1950's, mainly due to short-term solutions for pressing economic problems, which were also facilitated by the gradual dissolution of international tension following Stalin's death. A fast increase of incomes, reduction of prices and measures to improve living standards also contributed to the fact that Czechoslovakia was spared from the major symptoms of the crisis of the communist system in 1956, even if it broke out with greater intensity and accompanied by a worse economic situation in the 1960's.





## The Reorganization of the Czechoslovak Security Apparatus in 1953<sup>1</sup>

In December 1953, three months after being appointed Minister of the Interior, Rudolf Barák delivered a speech at the Ministry of the Interior that brought a symbolic end to the vast reorganization of the Czechoslovak security apparatus. The complex changes in the security apparatus had been foreshadowed by the death in March of Stalin and Czechoslovakian President Klement Gottwald, but the first indications of future changes were the interventions of Minister of National Security Karol Bacílek. In April 1953, he dissolved the much feared Investigation Units 6/A and 6/B, and established the Directorate for State Security Investigation by detaching it from the Main Directorate of State Security (*Štátní Bezpečnost*, ŠtB).<sup>2</sup> In May 1953, Bacílek strictly intervened against State Security officers in Bratislava, Žilina and Gottwaldov (today Zlín), who were responsible for unfounded arrests, the use of physical and mental violence, as

- 1 For a similar study on the dissolution of the Ministry of National Security and the subordination of security forces to the Ministry of the Interior in 1953, see Sivoš, Jerguš. 2013. "Pevně stát na stráži míru a bezpečnosti. Vznik ministerstva vnitra a reorganizácia Bezpečnosti v roku 1953" [*Firmly Guarding Peace and Security: Establishment of the Ministry of the Interior and the Reorganization of Security in 1953*]. *Paměť a dějiny*, 7 (3): pp. 73–84.
- 2 Archives of the State Security Services (*Archiv bezpečnostních složek*, henceforth: ABS, Arch.) A6/3, inventory unit (henceforth: inv. u.) 384. "Secret Order No. 100/1953 of the Minister of National Security of June 24, 1953. Establishment of the Directorate for State Security Investigation."

well as provocations.<sup>3</sup> The regime thus proclaimed war against the unlawful actions committed by State Security officers, especially within the lower ranks. In the words of Barák, whose 1953 speech was addressed to the heads, political personnel and party functionaries of the Ministry of the Interior: "Our new people's power is here to smite openly hostile elements and to protect the security and freedom of the working class and everyone who obeys the law."<sup>4</sup>

Although the communist regime openly fought against the unlawful activities of the Main Directorate of State Security, it nonetheless continued to tolerate the methods of State Security officers, as their complete abolishment would have destabilized the totalitarian system. The steps taken by Minister Bacílek with the approval of Soviet advisors were aimed at restoring the balance between the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (*Komunistická Strana Československa*, CSCP, henceforth: the CSCP) and the State Security Services, since in the previous period, the secret services gained too much power, even over the party itself. With the approval of Moscow, party leaders began to prepare for crucial changes in the Ministry of National Security, which were aimed not only at the dissolution the whole ministry but at the dissolution of the headquarters of State Security and the division of the State Security Services into several organizational entities that would be easier to manage and monitor. The reorganization was accompanied by the strengthening of party control over the security forces and limiting the use of the term 'state security'.

At the beginning of September 1953, the Politburo of the Central Committee of the CSCP approved the reorganization of the highest executive governing bodies. Subsequently, on September 11, 1953, the government decided to merge the Ministry of National Security with the Ministry of the Interior. At the same time, the Ministry of Local Economy was established and took over the tasks of the Ministry of

3 Ibidem, inv. u. 363. "Secret Order No. 79 of the Minister of National Security of May 14, 1953. Defects in the investigation of state security and military counterintelligence bodies."

4 Quoted from Czechoslovak Minister of the Interior R. Barák's speech on December 15, 1953 at a national meeting of heads, political workers and CSCP functionaries of the Ministry of the Interior. See ABS, Arch. A34, inv. u. 1991.

the Interior in the field of local economy and urban development, while the task of governing the National Committees (regional administration bodies) were relegated from the Ministry of the Interior to the Czechoslovak government. This "emptied" Ministry of the Interior basically served to "accommodate" the Ministry of National Security. As archivist Jan Frolík explains, the merger was not the demise but the survival of the Ministry of State Security under a different name. His claims are supported by the numbering of secret orders, as Secret Order No. 138 of the Minister of National Security of September 12, 1953 was followed by Secret Order No. 139 of the Minister of the Interior of September 22, 1953.<sup>5</sup>

The dissolution of the Ministry of National Security and the transfer of security forces to the Ministry of the Interior was by no means an isolated development in the Soviet Bloc. Other socialist states also took similar steps, including the Soviet Union itself, where in March 1953, the Ministry of State Security (*Ministerstvo Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti*, MGB) was merged with the Ministry of the Interior (*Ministerstvo Vnutrennich Del*, MVD). Even in East Germany, the Ministry of State Security (*Ministerium für Staatssicherheit*, MfS) was temporarily dissolved after the June 1953 uprising.<sup>6</sup> Regarding the similarity of these events, the measures of these regimes could be considered a deliberate departure from the power imbalance of the previous period. Changes in the organization of the Ministry of National Security and the State Security units as well as strengthening the Party's control over these bodies as influenced by the example of other counties were probably a subject of discussion

<sup>5</sup> Frolík, Jan. 2002. "Ještě k nástupu organizačního vývoje státobezpečnostních složek Sboru národní bezpečnosti v letech 1948–1989" ['Outline of the Development of the State Security Forces of the National Security Corps in the Years 1948–1989']. In *Sborník archivních prací* ['Collection of Archival Work'], Vol. 52, No. 2. Prague: OASS MV ČR, p. 390.

<sup>6</sup> The June uprising in East Germany was caused by the government's efforts to increase working quotas at factories. On June 17, 1953, the protests of workers resulted in a mass uprising dispersed only after the joint action of East-German security forces and the Soviet occupational armies. For more information, see Koop, Volker. 2003. *Der Aufstand vom 17. Juni 1953* ['The Uprising of June 17, 1953']. Berlin: Landeszentrale für politische Bildungsarbeit Berlin.

throughout the year 1953, which would explain the quick submission of relevant proposals, their sophisticated conceptual clarity and how these proposals were immediately discussed by the Advisory Board of the Minister.<sup>7</sup>

At the new Ministry of the Interior, officials were appointed to top-level positions in a relatively short time without broader discussion of potential candidates. On September 14, 1953, president Antonín Zápotocký dismissed Minister of National Security Karol Bacílek and appointed the young and ambitious Rudolf Barák as the new Minister of the Interior,<sup>8</sup> who was then joined by two newly appointed Deputy Ministers. Not a single person from the previous staff of the Ministry was allowed to keep their posts. Meanwhile, three out of four Deputy Ministers for National Security now became Deputy Ministers of the Interior: Oskár Jeleň, Jindřich Kotal, and thirty-year-old Antonín Prchal, who was appointed to the newly created post of First Deputy Minister of the Interior. Deputy Minister Stanislav Baudyš had to leave his post at the Ministry and was replaced by an officer of the Directorate for State Security Investigation, Karel Košťál, who at that time was a participant at the annual operative school of the MVD in Moscow.<sup>9</sup>

In the second half of September 1953, a discussion regarding the future organization of the Ministry of the Interior and its staff took place with the participation by Soviet advisors, and two weeks later on September 30, 1953, the first meeting of the Collegium of the

7 Frolík 2002, op. cit., pp. 387–388.

8 Rudolf Barák held the post of Minister of the Interior between September 14, 1953 and June 20, 1961. For more information, see Tomek, Prokop. 2009. *Život a doba ministra Rudolfa Baráka* ['The Life and Times of Minister Rudolf Barák']. Prague: Vyšehrad.

9 For more information about the abovementioned officials, see Kalous, Jan et al. 2009. *Biografický slovník představitelů ministerstva vnitra v letech 1948–1989. Ministři a jejich náměstci* ['A Biographic Encyclopedia of Representatives of the Ministry of the Interior in 1948–1989: Ministers and Their Deputies']. Prague: Ústav pro studium totalitních režimů. About First Deputy A. Prchal, see also Frolík, Jan. 1996. "Plukovník Antonín Prchal a jeho doba" ['Colonel Antonín Prchal and His Era']. In *Minulosti Západočeského kraje* ['On the Past of the West Bohemian Region'], vol. 31. Ústí nad Labem: Archiv města Plzně, Albis International, pp. 129–185.

Ministry of the Interior was held. The participants included Minister of the Interior R. Barák, main Soviet advisor of the Ministry of the Interior Alexei Beschasov (who held this post between 1951–1954) and his two deputies (Fotiy and Alexander),<sup>10</sup> the three Deputy Ministers of the Interior (A. Prchal, O. Jeleň, and J. Kotal), head of Foreign Intelligence and former head of the Main Directorate of the State Security, Jaroslav Miller,<sup>11</sup> and head of the Personnel Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior, Stanislav Zadrobílek.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> In the internal correspondence of the Ministry, only the first names of Soviet advisors were used. Surnames were completely omitted.

<sup>11</sup> Jaroslav Miller (1914–1979) joined the service of the Ministry of the Interior in December 1948. After the establishment of the Ministry of National Security, he was the head of Department V of Sector II (Former Persons) in the mid-1950's. At the beginning of February 1951, after the arrest of leading officials of State Security, he was appointed as head of Sector II (Political Intelligence). In April 1952, he was appointed as Deputy Head and in July 1952, as the Head of State Security. After the reorganization of 1953, he was appointed as the Head of Foreign Intelligence. Miller held the post until November 22, 1961, when he was dismissed for "insufficient direction." He was subsequently appointed Deputy Head of the Main Directorate of Censorship of the Ministry of the Interior. At the end December 1962, he was stripped of his rank due to the use of "unlawful and improper methods during 1949–1953." The accusation was later modified to "as the Head of State Security, he had to assume responsibility for improper methods used in operative work." Dvořáková, Jiřina. 2007. *Státní bezpečnost v letech 1945–1953. Organizační vývoj zpravodajských a státně bezpečnostních složek* ['State Security in 1945–1953: The Organizational Development of the Intelligence and State Security Forces']. Prague: ÚDV, p. 197.

<sup>12</sup> Stanislav Zadrobílek (1918), a member of the CSCP since June 1, 1945, joined the National Security Corps (NSC) at the beginning of June 1945. He worked at the Provincial Headquarters of the NSC in Prague and subsequently as a District Officer of State Security in Prague, which carried out intelligence tasks against non-communist parties and screened people with suspicious pasts within the CSCP and its apparatus. From July 1948, he worked at Department III/10 (Corps Personnel), and after the reorganization, he joined the headquarters of the State Security Services in Prague. From January 1953, he worked at the Personnel Directorate of the Ministry of National Security as the Head of the unit. In April, he was appointed as the Deputy Head, and on August 1, as the Head of the Directorate. He held this post between October 1, 1953 and August 15, 1956. In the next three years, he once again worked as Deputy Head of the Directorate until the middle of November 1959, when he was appointed Deputy Director of the Central School of the Ministry of the Interior. In the middle of May 1960, he was transferred to the Department of Foreign Relations of the Internal Directorate

Deputy Minister Karel Košťál and Head of the Second Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior Vladimír Matoušek did not attend this meeting due to their training at the operative school of the MVD in Moscow. The importance of the advisors and their role in the reorganization of the security forces is evident not only from the number of advisors attending the first meeting, but also from the fact that their names were recorded in the minutes right after the Minister and before his deputies.

At the first meeting of the Advisory Board of the Minister of the Interior, apart from Minister Barák's brief summary regarding the ongoing reorganization, the board members focused on proposals for orders connected with the merger of the Ministry of National Security with the Ministry of the Interior, on the appointment of important officials, and a proposal for the deployment of individual units of the Ministry of the Interior.<sup>13</sup> On the next day, Minister Barák issued three out of the four mentioned orders (the order for the deployment of parts of the Ministry was issued a week later),<sup>14</sup> and at two o'clock in the afternoon, he welcomed in his office every new head of the Ministry's units in the presence of the secretaries

(Secretariat) of the Ministry of the Interior, where he worked as the Head until April 15, 1970. For the next four years, he worked as the Head of the Secretariat of the Physical Training Unit "Red Star," and in the following two years, he held leading posts in the Directorate of Physical Training and Top Sporting of the Federal Ministry of the Interior. He retired in 1976. ABS, "Personal Files of the Employees of the Ministry of the Interior. Filing Card of Stanislav Zadrobílek"; Dvořáková 2007, op. cit., p. 44.

13 ABS, Arch. A2/1, inv. u. 128. "Minutes from the first meeting of the Collegium of the Ministry of the Interior, September 30, 1953."

14 For more information see ABS, Arch. A6/3, inv. u. 427. "Secret Order No. 143/1953 of the Minister of the Interior of October 1, 1953. Merger of the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of National Security of the Czechoslovak Republic"; Ibidem, inv. u. 428. "Secret Order No. 144/1953 of the Minister of the Interior of October 1, 1953. Organization of the Ministry of the Interior"; Ibidem, inv. u. 429. "Secret Order No. 145/1953 of the Minister of the Interior of October 1, 1953. Appointment of Heads in connection with the new organization of the Ministry of the Interior"; Ibidem, inv. u. 433. "Secret Order No. 149/1953 of the Minister of the Interior of October 7, 1953. Deployment of the Ministry of the Interior."

of the most important committees of the CSCP and the heads of political departments.<sup>15</sup>

Throughout October 1953, six meetings of the Collegium of the Ministry of the Interior were held in rapid succession (on October 8, 13, 15, 20, 23 and 29, respectively), where participants, including the heads of ministry units, discussed and approved the proposals for the new organization and staffing of the Ministry of the Interior, as well as short-term plans for the individual organizational units of the Ministry. The Collegium had nine more meetings by the second half of December 1953, and apart from approving the systematization of new changes, these meetings also discussed the organization of security forces in regions and districts.

On September 29, 1953, the structure of the central apparatus of the Ministry of the Interior was approved by the Political Secretariat of the Central Committee of the CSCP and became effective at the beginning of October 1953. Its internal structure mirrored the Soviet model in terms of the organizational division of security units and consisted of 42 individual divisions, including units transferred from the "old" Ministry of the Interior (such as the Central Directorate of Firefighting, the Main Directorate of Censorship, the Directorate of Civil Defense, the Directorate of Archives, and the National Committee Unit) and educational facilities of the Ministry (including the School of F. E. Dzerzhinsky in Prague, the School of the Ministry of the Interior in Veltrusy, the School of the Ministry of the Interior in Kroměříž, the School of the Directorate of Correctional Facilities in Řepy, and the Driving School in Brno.)

State Security units underwent a vast reorganization, as the Main Directorate of State Security, formerly one integral unit directed by a Deputy Minister of National Security, was dissolved and its formerly subordinate units reorganized into individual units. Unit 1 was transformed into Directorate II (Counterintelligence), while Unit 2 (Political Intelligence) became Directorate III. Unit 3 (Economic Intelligence) was transformed into Directorate IV. Unit

15 ABS, Arch. A2/1, inv. u. 128. "Minutes from the first meeting of the Collegium of the Ministry of the Interior on September 30, 1953."

3/A (Transport and Communications Counterintelligence), which did not even last a year due to the reorganization, became Directorate V. Unit 4 of the Main Directorate of State Security was merged with the Technical Institute of the Ministry of National Security as Directorate IX of the Ministry of the Interior. Unit 5, which was responsible for surveillance, profiling and operative work was transformed into Directorate VII., and Unit 7 of the Main Directorate of State Security, which was formerly charged with correspondence interception and the protection of state secrets, was taken over by Special Unit 2 of the Ministry of the Interior. This unit also took over some tasks of the Department of Translations and the analysis of foreign hostile stations from the secretariat of the Main Directorate of State Security.

Bodies of the State Security Services that were not part of the Main Directorate before the reorganization were transformed into either Directorates or Special Units of the Ministry of the Interior. Following the Soviet example, the Directorate of Foreign Intelligence became Directorate I of the Ministry of the Interior. The Military Intelligence Service was merged with the Department of Military Counterintelligence of the Military Technical Institute to create Directorate VI (Military Counterintelligence). Directorate VIII assumed the responsibility of protecting the President, party and state officials, and Klement Gottwald's Mausoleum. The former Passport Unit of the Ministry of National Security transformed into Special Unit 3. The Operative File Unit merged with the Archives and Study Unit to form Special Unit 1. Interestingly, the Directorate of Investigation, which already transformed in April 1953, is the only directorate without a designated number. Department III of the Ministry of the Interior, formerly part of the Secretariat of the Main Directorate of State Security, was responsible for the deciphering service keeping nonstop radio and teleprinter contact with other Directorates, as well as with friendly countries (in Russian). For a simplified overview of the organizational structures of individual units of State Security in fall 1953, please refer to the following table.



## THE REORGANIZATION OF CZECHOSLOVAK SECURITY APPARATUS...

*Table 1. Division of State Security Units into Independent Organizational Units in Fall of 1953*

Ministry of National Security	Ministry of the Interior
↓	↓
Main Directorate of State Security	Independent Central Units
↓	↓
Unit 1 (Counterintelligence)	Directorate I
Unit 2 (Political Intelligence)	Directorate II
Unit 3 (Economic Intelligence)	Directorate III
Unit 3/A (Transport and Communication)	Directorate IV
Unit 4 (Technical Equipment)	Directorate V
Unit 5 (Surveillance and Profiling)	Directorate VI
Units 6/A, 6/B	Directorate of Investigation (April 1953)
Unit 7 (State Secrets and Censorship)	Special Unit 2

In October 1953, an order specifying the Minister's and his Deputy Ministers' responsibility for the individual units of the Ministry of the Interior came into effect. The manner in which individual units were now directed shows that the objective was to divide State Security units into several subdivisions and divide control between more officials of the Ministry than before. For comparison's sake, before October 1953, the majority of units were concentrated in the Main Directorate of State Security and commanded by the Deputy Minister of National Security, while after the reorganization, a total of fifteen units were controlled by the Minister and his three Deputy Ministers. The only exception was Deputy Minister Jindřich Koval, who became temporarily responsible for the economic divisions of the Ministry in addition to the units already under his control.<sup>16</sup> On

<sup>16</sup> On May 1, 1954, the post of Fifth Deputy Minister was taken over by Karel Klíma, head of Directorate VIII of the Ministry of the Interior. See Kalous et al. 2009, op. cit., pp. 90–91.

October 20, 1953, Minister R. Barák issued a secret order regarding the classification of the records of the Ministry of the Interior,<sup>17</sup> but the reorganization only "officially" ended with the issuance of another secret order on December 31, 1953. According to this order, "the new organizational structure of the central apparatus and the schools of the Ministry of the Interior was subsequently implemented and will come into effect by October 8, 1953." By the same date, Minister Barák revoked all orders and decrees specifying the structure of the Ministry of National Security.<sup>18</sup>

*Table 2. Control of State Security Units  
Before and After the Reorganization of 1953*

**Before October 1953:**

- 1/ Minister of National Security K. Bacilek
  - Directorate for the Protection of the President
  - Directorate for the Protection of Party and Government Officials
- 2/ Deputy Minister of National Security A. Prchal
  - Main Directorate of State Security
  - Directorate of Foreign-Political Intelligence
  - Autonomous Filing Unit
  - Autonomous Passport Unit
- 3/ Deputy Minister of National Security O. Jeleň
  - Main Directorate of Military Counterintelligence

**After the Reorganization:**

- 1/ Minister of the Interior R. Barák
  - Department III of the Ministry, Directorate VIII

17 ABS, Arch. A6/3, inv. u. 436. "Secret Order No. 152/1953 of the Minister of the Interior of October 20, 1953. Classification of records of the Ministry of the Interior."

18 Ibidem, inv. u. 480. "Secret Order No. 196/1953 of the Minister of the Interior of December 31, 1953. Organization of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Czechoslovakia."

## THE REORGANIZATION OF CZECHOSLOVAK SECURITY APPARATUS...

- 2/ First Deputy Minister A. Prchal
  - Directorates I-V, Special Unit 5
- 3/ Deputy Minister K. Košťál
  - Directorates VII and IX, Special Units 1 to 3
  - Directorate of Investigation
- 4/ Deputy Minister O. Jelen
  - Directorate VI

The dissolution of the Ministry of National Security and the reorganization of security forces were not accompanied by any change in their leading officers. On September 30, 1953, during its very first meeting, the Collegium of the Ministry of the Interior approved the staffing of key posts without further discussion, and the leading posts of operative directorates were taken over by top officials of the dissolved Main Directorate of State Security. Jaroslav Miller, Head of the center at Prague was appointed as the Head of Foreign Intelligence. His three deputies, Vladimír Matoušek, František Svoboda,<sup>19</sup> and Jiří Rybín,<sup>20</sup> were appointed as heads of

<sup>19</sup> František Svoboda (1909), a member of the CSCP since June 9, 1945, joined the Ministry of the Interior after spending three years in prison (at Pankrác, Terezín, Auschwitz, and Buchenwald) in June 1945. At first he worked at Department "F" at the Regional Office of the State Security Services in Prague, but at the end of 1948, he was appointed Head of Department II (political trials and overseeing the work of Department VI of the Regional Headquarters of State Security) of Sector BAC ("Small State Security"). After the reorganization of October 1949, he was appointed Deputy Head of Sector BAa-VI (administrative tasks and the formerly autonomous Sector BAC). At the beginning of the 1950's, he worked as Deputy Head of the Main Directorate of the Regional Headquarters of State Security in Prague. In the middle of February 1953, he was appointed First Deputy Head of the Main Directorate of State Security. He was the director of political intelligence from October 1953 until November 1955, when he joined Special Unit II of the Ministry of the Interior. In January 1964, he was dismissed from the National Security Corps. For more information, see ABS, Arch. "Personal Files of the Employees of the Ministry of the Interior. Filing Card of František Svoboda"; Dvořáková 2007, op. cit., pp. 44, 118, 138, 145.

<sup>20</sup> From December 1945 onwards, Jiří Rybín (1922–1986) occupied leading posts in economic intelligence. In February 1952, he was appointed Third Deputy Head of State Security, then in October 1953, to Head of Directorate IV of the Ministry of the Interior. In 1962, he was dismissed from the National Security Corps due

Directorates II (Counterintelligence), III (Political Intelligence) and IV (Economic Intelligence), respectively. Furthermore, Antonín Kavan (who took over after completing one year of re-education at the operative school of the MVD in Moscow),<sup>21</sup> Karel Smíšek,<sup>22</sup> and Josef Stavinoha<sup>23</sup> (who was in office from January 1953 until the end of 1971), held their posts of heads of the Directorates of Surveillance, Equipment, and Military Counterintelligence, respectively. Karel Klíma,<sup>24</sup> hitherto Deputy Head of Directorate VIII, assumed control

to the use of "unlawful and improper methods during 1949–1953." ABS, Arch. "Personal Files of the Employees of the Ministry of the Interior. Filing Card of Jiří Rybín." Evidence No. 6028/22.

- 21 Antonín Kavan (1921) worked as Deputy Head of Surveillance between February 1, 1951 and January 31, 1982, with a break between July 15, 1968 and March 15, 1971. See Kretschmer, Adam. 1994. "Antonín Kavan – pilíř socialistické zákonnosti" [Antonín Kavan: A Pillar of the Socialist Rule of Law]. *Securitas Imperii*, 2: pp. 291–298; Urbánek, Miroslav. 2005. "Správa sledování Ministerstva vnitra v letech 1948–89. Stručný nástin organizačního vývoje" [Directorate for the Surveillance of the Ministry of the Interior in 1948–89: A Short Outline of the Organizational Development]. In *Sborník Archivu Ministerstva vnitra* [Overview of the Archives of the Ministry of the Interior], vol. 3. Prague: OASS MV ČR, p. 222.
- 22 Between 1933 and 1941, Karel Smíšek, a pre-war member of the CSCP, worked at the technical section of the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (*Narodnyy Komissariat Vnutrennikh Del*, NKVD). In May 1945, he joined the cipher department of Unit "Z". Between July 1945 and May 1948, he maintained radiotelegraphic connection between Prague and Moscow, ciphering and deciphering all messages by himself until 1950. At the end of 1945, he became the first head of the secret CSCP organization at the Ministry of the Interior. After Unit III (Security) was established in 1949, he directed Department III/At (Equipment). Dvořáková 2007, op. cit., pp. 97–99.
- 23 In the middle of February 1952, Josef Stavinoha, Ing. (1918), who passed the High Political and Social School in Prague, joined the Ministry of the Interior after spending several years at the Ministry of National Defense. He was appointed Deputy Head of the Military Intelligence Service responsible for political issues, and later became the Head of Military Counterintelligence. He was in office from January 11, 1953 until December 31, 1971. In 1972, he returned to the Ministry of National Defense as a major general. ABS, Arch. "Personal Files of the Employees of the Ministry of the Interior. Filing Card of Josef Stavinoha."
- 24 From 1950, Karel Klíma (1908–1982) worked as an officer of military counterintelligence. In August 1952, he was appointed Deputy Head of the Main Directorate of Protection of the Ministry of National Security, head of the personal protection brigade "Castle" and the personal bodyguard of the President. From October 1953, he was in charge of Directorate VIII of the Ministry of the

over the Directorate for the Protection of Party and Government Officials before being appointed as one of the five Deputy Ministers of the Interior at the beginning of May 1954.

Even after the reorganization, Bohumil Doubek, Head of the Unit for State Security Investigation, which was responsible for inhuman interrogation methods and the torture of real or alleged enemies of the communist regime, remained at the security services. The original proposal mentions his name in connection with the Directorate of the Economy, but he was rejected during the first meeting of the Collegium on September 30, 1953.<sup>25</sup> Doubek was appointed as Deputy Head of the Directorate of Correctional Facilities. However, within one year, he left the Ministry due to financial problems and heavy drinking.<sup>26</sup>

*Table 3. Appointed Heads of the Individual Bodies  
of State Security in Fall of 1953*

Directorate I	Lieutenant Colonel Jaroslav Miller
Directorate II	Major Vladimír Matoušek (in Moscow)
Directorate III	Major František Svoboda
Directorate IV	Major Jiří Rybín
Directorate V	First Lieutenant Ludvík Fiala
Directorate VI	Lieutenant Colonel Josef Stavinoha, Ing.
Directorate VII	Major Antonín Kavan (in Moscow)
Directorate VIII	Colonel Karel Klíma
Directorate IX	Lieutenant Colonel Karel Smřek
Directorate of Investigation	Lieutenant Colonel Milan Moučka
Special Unit 1	Major Václav Jiras
Special Unit 2	Captain Milan Doležal, JUDr.
Special Unit 3	Major Josef Linart

Interior. Between June 1954 and November 1961, he was appointed Deputy Minister of the Interior. Kalous et al. 2009, op. cit., pp. 90–91.

25 ABS, Arch. A2/1, inv. u. 128. "Collegium of the Ministry of the Interior. Personal Order of the Minister No. 1256, Proposal."

26 See Kaplan, Karel. 1999. *Nebezpečná bezpečnost. Státní bezpečnost 1948–1956* ['Dangerous Security: State Security in 1948–1956']. Brno: Doplněk.

Special Unit 5	First Lieutenant Jan Vlček
Department III	First Lieutenant Rudolf Váňa

In the last three months of 1953, the Collegium continued to negotiate the planned systematization of the Ministry bodies, in particular the staffing proposal prepared by the Directorate of Personnel Affairs of the Ministry of the Interior. Their proposal for a limited number of personnel was based on numbers approved by the Political Secretariat of the Central Committee of the CSCP and the actual number of individual bodies of the Ministry, but the demands of the individual heads of the bodies were also taken into account.

At the end of 1953, the systematization of all individual bodies was approved by the Central Committee of the CSCP. Overall, the number of staff at the central bodies was reduced by 913 persons despite an increase of staff in almost every individual body. However, this figure should be examined in the context of a vast, over 50% decrease of staff at the Directorate for the Protection of Party and Government Officials from 2,511 officers to 1,100 (a total of 1,401 persons dismissed). The operative bodies of State Security saw a significant, and definitely not the last, increase in personnel. The Foreign Intelligence Service gained 117 employees (going from 360 to 477 persons employed); Counterintelligence increased its ranks by 114 (going from 210 to 324); Political Intelligence by 42 (from 168 to 210); Economic Intelligence by 132 (from 151 to 283); Transport and Communications Counterintelligence by 48 (from 34 to 82), and Surveillance and Profiling by 104 (from 651 to 755). In turn, Military Counterintelligence personnel was reduced by 66 employees (from 365 to 299) and the Investigation Directorate by 36 (from 152 to 116). Other bodies were unaffected except for Special Unit 5 of the Ministry of the Interior responsible for Eastern emigration, which was supported by Soviet advisors and increased its staff was by 18 (from 26 to 44).

Overall, the staff of the Ministry of the Interior increased from 10,352 to 10,385 employees. Among individual bodies of the Ministry, some increased their personnel by nearly 200 employees (from 7,821 to 8,014). In January 1954, however, the number of staff was to be reduced again by 15% as per the decision of the officials

of the Ministry. Starting from 8,469 employees, the Directorate of Personnel Affairs suggested reducing staff by 1,252 employees (to 7,217), while the heads of individual bodies proposed a cut of 753 employees (to 7,716).<sup>27</sup> By the end of 1953, the number of personnel at the central bodies of State Security and the changes brought on by systematization were approved by the Central Committee of the CSCP, and can be seen in the table below.<sup>28</sup>

*Table 4. Number of Staff of the Central Units of State Security  
Before and After the Systematization Approved  
by the Central Committee of the CSCP at the End of 1953*

State Security Unit	No. of Staff	Systematization Change	Difference
Directorate I	382	from 360 to 477	+ 117
Directorate II	202	from 210 to 324	+ 114
Directorate III	166	from 168 to 210	+ 42
Directorate IV	160	from 151 to 283	+ 132
Directorate V	47	from 34 to 82	+ 48
Directorate VI	273	from 365 to 299	- 66
Directorate VII	468	from 651 to 755	+ 104
Directorate VIII	1,301	from 2,511 to 1,110	- 1,401
Directorate IX	494	from 678 to 690	+ 12
Investigation Directorate	109	from 152 to 116	- 36
Special Unit 1	180	from 212 to 208	- 4
Special Unit 2	192	from 268 to 280	+ 12
Special Unit 3	84	from 100 to 90	- 10
Special Unit 5	28	from 26 to 44	+ 18
Department III	10	from 7 to 12	+ 5
Total	4,096	from 5,893 to 4,980	- 913

<sup>27</sup> ABS, Arch. A2/1, inv. u. 146. "Minutes of the second meeting of the Collegium of the Ministry of the Interior on January 12, 1954."

<sup>28</sup> The table is based on information from in the fifth, twelfth, and fourteenth meetings of the Collegium of the Ministry of the Interior. See Ibidem, inv. u. 132, 137 and 138.

The Fall of 1953 brought changes not only for central units, but also for the regional units of state security when the Ministry of the Interior submitted a proposal to the Politburo for the merger of the Regional Directorate of State Security, the Regional Directorate of Public Security, and the Regional Directorate of Correctional Facilities into a single organizational unit called the Regional Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior. On October 23, 1953, the first detailed proposal of the competences and organizational structure of the Regional Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior was discussed at the sixth meeting of the Collegium of the Ministry. At the very last moment, a proposal containing a sample chart of organization for the Regional Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior, submitted by the Head of Directorate of Personnel Affairs, Major Stanislav Zadrobílek, was included in the program of the meeting. Their efforts to execute the reorganization as soon as possible at every level is further evidenced by the fact that one day before the meeting, members of the Collegium still did not have any documentation regarding the merger plans and likely received all relevant information directly at the meeting.<sup>29</sup> At the same time, the speedy resolution and approval of all issues related to the new organization by the CSCP bodies shows that the Minister prepared the reorganization so that individual units would be able to adopt the new organizational structure by January 1954.<sup>30</sup>

Internal documentation defined the Regional Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior and its main tasks as follows: "The Regional Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior is responsible for the deployment of operative agents against the agents of imperialist espionage agencies, and enemies from within the internal reaction. It protects the public order and the security of citizens within the district, and monitors citizens' adherence to the common rules of socialist life. It protects cooperative property, state property, and the personal

<sup>29</sup> ABS, Arch. A2/1, inv. u. 133. "Program of the sixth meeting of the Collegium of the Ministry of the Interior on November 22, 1953."

<sup>30</sup> Sivoš, Jerguš and Kinčok, Branislav. 2010. "Organizačná štruktúra a personálne obsadenie Krajskej správy Ministerstva vnútra Bratislava v rokoch 1954–1966" ["The Organizational Structure and Staff of the Regional Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior in Bratislava in 1954–1966"]. *Pamäť národa*, 6 (3): p. 39.



property of citizens. It directs municipal and road transport in the region. It fights criminals, especially economic saboteurs, vermin and those who disturb the public order. It directs and implements the prison sentences of convicts, and ensures the proper surveillance, utilization, correction and re-education of prisoners."<sup>31</sup>

As we can see from the definition above, hitherto autonomous security forces were merged, which at the same time suggests the dominant role of state security and its bodies hidden within the structure of the Regional Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior in the guise of units and departments. On November 9, 1953, the new organizational structure of the regional security bodies was approved by the political secretariat of the Central Committee of the CSCP. On January 1, 1954, in accordance with the secret order of Minister Barák, several Regional Directorates of the Ministry of the Interior were established.<sup>32</sup>

The organizational structure of the Regional Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior was almost identical to the organizational structure of the central units of State Security, which were concealed in the complex and obscure structure of the Ministry. The tasks of the individual bodies within the Regional Directorates were identical to those of the directorates and units at the Ministry to which the bodies were subordinate. For instance, in practice, Directorate III of the Ministry of the Interior was responsible for the work of Unit 3 within each Regional Directorate. Military counterintelligence was an exception to the rule, as its territorial units deployed at the Regional Military Directorates were directly subordinate to the central command. Another exception was the Directorate for the Protection of Party and State Officials, which only had one remote office at the Regional Directorate in Bratislava (Unit 8). However, due to Bratislava's strategic position as the political and cultural center of Slovakia, the Regional Directorate in Bratislava partially functioned as

31 ABS, Arch. A2/1, inv. u. 133. "Structure of the Regional Directorates of the Ministry of the Interior."

32 Ibidem, Arch. A6/3, inv. u. 481. "Secret Order No. 197/1953 of the Minister of the Interior of December 31, 1953. Organization of the Regional Directorates of the Ministry of the Interior."

an unofficial Slovak security center. For the structure of the Regional Directorate in Bratislava, see Appendix 2.

After the reorganization of 1953, the lowest organizational unit of State Security was the District Departments of the Ministry of the Interior, which included operative groups as well. With minor changes, this organizational structure of State Security remained in place on the central and regional level until the mid-1960's.

At the beginning of Fall of 1953, the reorganization of the Ministry of the Interior and its subordinate security forces began under the strict guidance of Soviet advisors, so the resulting internal structure mirrored the Soviet model of the division of security forces. Czechoslovak party leadership expected that the reorganization would increase the control of the party apparatus over the security forces, as the reorganization entailed the division of State Security into several autonomous subdivisions subordinate to the four leading officials of the Ministry. The changes did not entail a significant departure from the system of the previous period: the Ministry of National Security was merely merged into the Ministry of the Interior, and these changes were not accompanied by a change of command.

The systematization of changes suggests that party officials had changed their minds regarding the methods of dealing with the enemies of the Czechoslovak regime. In September 1953, a Directorate of Correctional Facilities was established within the Ministry of National Security to take over the direction of prisons and the Prison Guards Corps from the Ministry of Justice. This change was explained by the need to unify custody and the execution of prison sentences, but essentially allowed the Ministry of National Security to make decisions regarding the personal freedom of citizens. At the beginning of 1953, the peak in Czechoslovak prison history, 355 prisons held approximately 46,000 prisoners.<sup>33</sup> The new party leadership headed by President Antonín Zápotocký and First Secretary of the Central Committee of the CSCP Antonín Novotný attempted to project the operative principles of the Soviet secret services onto Czechoslovak State Security. However, the Soviet model itself underwent great

<sup>33</sup> Dvořáková 2007, op. cit., p. 231.

changes after the arrest and execution of Beria, the dissolution of the MGB, and the establishment of the KGB. The reorganization of the political police and the partial reassessment of its role was no longer geared towards political trials, fear, or the imprisonment of suspicious elements into prisons or labor camps. The control of the opposition, mostly by use of the network of secret collaborators, had now become their top priority. The change is evident not only from the secret order of the Minister of the Interior issued at the beginning of 1954 to close smaller prisons, but also from the fact that within the Directorate of Surveillance and the Regional Units of Surveillance and Profiling, a department and several specialized groups were established with the task of "creating a wide network of agents and informants from the employees and visitors of public venues such as hotels, restaurants, cafés, entertainment venues and night clubs."<sup>34</sup>

The disappearance of the term 'state security' underlines the effort of the new party leadership to depart from the bad practices of the previous period, which is considered the bloodiest era of peace in Czech history and modern Slovak history, and enter a new era later referred to by historians as the "founding period of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia." On the central level, the Main Directorate of State Security was replaced by Foreign Intelligence and Counterintelligence directorates, while on regional level, Regional Directorates of State Security were replaced by Regional Directorates of the Ministry of the Interior, and on the lowest level, District Departments of State Security were replaced by the District Department of the Ministry of the Interior. The term 'state security' only resurfaced in official terminology after 1966.

In the new period, the organization of the Ministry of the Interior also underwent minor changes. In April 1956, A. Prchal and K. Košťál were forced to leave their posts in order for the Party to assume greater control over the security apparatus, and at the beginning of the

<sup>34</sup> ABS, Arch. A6/3, inv. u. 463. "Secret Order No. 179/1953 of the Minister of the Interior of December 17, 1953. Establishment of Department V of Directorate VIII of the Ministry of the Interior; tasks of the bodies of Department II of Unit 7 of the Regional Directorates of the Ministry of the Interior."

1960's, they were followed by other leading officials of the operative directorates of the Ministry that were responsible for the unlawful work of the State Security Services in 1948–1953. From the mid-1950's, officers who passed the annual course of the operative school of the MVD, and later on of the KGB in Moscow, were appointed to key positions within the security apparatus. Similar changes also occurred in the leading positions of the Ministry and its bodies, but more complex changes only took place in the middle of the 1960's.

BORIS MIHAYLOV

## Bulgaria in 1956

1956 was an illustrious year in the history of Eastern Europe that marked the awakening of the Eastern Bloc from the repression of the Stalinist model of socialism. Stalin's death on March 5, 1953 brought on moderate changes in all affected dictatorial regimes, but these changes acquired a new scope after the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) on February 25, 1956. At the Congress, newly appointed Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev read his report known as the "Secret Speech," which contained the first comprehensive criticism of Stalin's crimes against the Soviet Union and the Eastern European countries of the Soviet Bloc. In particular, his criticism targeting Stalin's "cult of personality" had a massive international impact, as it shook people's blind belief in communism and in the Soviet Union as the "homeland of the world proletariat," opening the eyes of intellectuals worldwide to the harsh realities of the Soviet system.

Khrushchev's 1956 report at the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU had an immediate impact on the Eastern European allies of the Soviet Union. Since the Secret Speech resulted in moderate party criticism of Stalinism in the Eastern Bloc, intellectuals seized the opportunity to appeal for freedom of speech and social liberalism. Some changes also occurred in the power structure, where local Stalinists in the communist party leadership were replaced by nationalist communists. However, it is important to note that these changes occurred at a different pace and produced different results in each country. The raging struggle for power between Stalin's heirs and his Eastern European puppets provided an opportunity for the first acts

of resistance, peaceful or armed, against the communist regimes of the Soviet Bloc. At any rate, the leadership of the communist parties and the subordinate bodies of the political polices perceived the people's resistance and acts of discontent as counterrevolutionary riots that threatened the very existence of the established political system, and took countermeasures accordingly. One example would be Hungary, where resistance escalated into a revolution in the fall and was ultimately suppressed by Soviet military intervention.

The political processes in the decade after Stalin's death are often described with euphemisms and clichés such as the struggle to end the cults of personality or achieve peaceful co-existence between different socialist systems. In its essence, however, the process of de-Stalinization was limited to eliminating the "perversions" of the Stalinist repressions (1934–1953) and reverting back to the practice of "collective leadership" from the period before the establishment of the tyrannical leadership of Stalin (1921–1928).

In Bulgaria, the process of de-Stalinization followed the script of the Kremlin as strictly as possible, but did so in line with the specific domestic realities of the Bulgarian state. The transformation of the Stalinist political system was executed by the party functionaries who participated most actively in the implementation of the Stalinist model and the repression of its political opponents and competitors. Episodically, communist leadership encountered resistance in Bulgaria as well, including two isolated strikes in May 1953 organized by tobacco workers in Plovdiv and textile workers in Khaskovo,<sup>1</sup> and the on-going guerilla resistance of the *Goryani* Movement. Regarding the scope of resistance, communist leadership in Sofia was not pressured to counter the emerging dissident intellectual clubs and spontaneously unfolding mass public unrests and anti-government riots like its Hungarian and Polish counterparts were. However, leadership did mobilize its security forces to prevent or repress potential or imaginary "hostile elements." Another difference from the prescribed Soviet practice was that some of the rehabilitated

1 State Archives, Plovdiv, ф. 235-Б, оп. 1, а. е. 10, л. 50–52; АКРА ОПБГДСРБНА–М, ф. 1, оп. 1, а. е. 2811.

political figures in Bulgaria returned to the corridors of power, even at middle management level.

On July 4 and September 5, 1953, the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party (*Balgarska Komunisticheska Partiya*, BKP, henceforth: the BCP) in Sofia implemented the first measures of the de-Stalinization process. The decisions issued by the Politburo were a direct reflection of the actions of the Kremlin following Stalin's death and Beria's arrest, and included pardoning political prisoners sentenced for "counterrevolutionary activities," closing eleven prisons and the Belene labor camp,<sup>2</sup> as well as resolving the situation of "displaced persons." The next two years saw the release of prominent politicians from the period before September 9, 1944, activists of the oppositional Bulgarian Agrarian People's Union (*Balgarski Zemedelski Naroden Săjuz*, BZNS), "royal officers," and party cadres who were detained with false accusations in 1949–1952.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, the system still perceived these former prisoners as potentially dangerous persons, therefore they remained under the surveillance of the secret services in the following years, as evidenced by the documents of the State Security authorities.<sup>4</sup>

Between Stalin's death in 1953 and Khrushchev's Secret Speech at the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU in 1956, similarly to other Eastern European countries of the Soviet Bloc, a paradoxical situation

2 On April 29, 1954, the internment system was abolished for all displaced persons, but with a number of restrictions concerning their return to their previous residence. Such persons had to obtain a special permission issued by the law enforcement authorities to return to the border areas or to certain larger cities in the country. АКРАОПБГДРСБНА–М, ф. 23, оп. 2, а. е. 1, л. 24.

3 During the period of the purge against "the enemy within the Party" with the direct participation of "investigative teams" and "advisors" from the Soviet Union, approximately one hundred thousand communist functionaries were investigated. See Ognianov, Lubomir (ed.) 2001. *Archivite govoriyat* ['The Archives Talk'], Documentary no. 17: "Borbi i chistki v BKP 1948–1953" ['Struggles and purges in the BCP, 1948–1953']. Sofia. As a result of triggered checks of the investigation authorities, some of the arrested people were released, though not rehabilitated, between 1950 and 1951.

4 See Десталинизацията – дилемата на едно противоречиво десетилетие (1953–1964) ['De-Stalinization – the dilemma of a controversial decade (1953–1964)']. Documentary series. Sofia, 2015.

occurred in Bulgaria where Prime Minister and leader of the BCP Valko Chervenkov was called upon to assess the consequences of his own cult of personality. Paradoxical as it seems, this event highlights one of the main peculiarities of the de-Stalinization process, a constant transfer of responsibility onto others. In January 1954, Bulgarian party leadership was summoned to Moscow for a secret consultation concerning the new Soviet model. Two months later at the Sixth Congress of the BCP in March 1954, leadership made a decision to remove the position of Secretary General and formally separate the power of the Party and the State. This decision, however, was merely an empty gesture, since Prime Minister Valko Chervenkov kept his control over the Politburo of the Central Committee of the BCP, and the new position of First Secretary and the three-member secretariat of the Communist Party had mainly organizational and executive functions. The new position was filled by Todor Zhivkov, Chervenkov's closest assistant from the transitional years, whom he personally elevated into the party hierarchy in 1950. At the Twentieth Congress Congress of the CPSU, Chervenkov was the leader of the Bulgarian delegation (which did not even include First Secretary Todor Zhivkov).

In April 1956, in his speech before the Bulgarian Communist Party Plenum, Chervenkov blamed the "internal hostile Beriaist elements" of state security for their "perversion," and then went on to state that "I cannot take the blame for giving any direct instructions for vicious methods of investigation by State Security. On the contrary, I struggled against this."<sup>5</sup> In the end, Chervenkov's refusal to adhere to the thoroughly revised policies of de-Stalinization and the existing tension within the leadership of the BCP resulted in his removal from power.

The shorthand of the Plenum of the Central Committee of the BCP held between April 2 and 6, 1956<sup>6</sup> was for many years one of the top secret documents in the Party Archives due to the fact that it contained the actual situation and makeup of Bulgarian communist leadership. For instance, Zhivkov's consolidation as First Secretary was far from

5 Central State Archives, ф. 1Б, on. 5, а.е. 195, л. 72–82.

6 "The April Plenum of the Central Committee of the BCP, 1956." A Verbatim Report. 2002.



smooth as some participants regarded his ascension to power with skepticism and hostility. Lieutenant General Yonko Panov, member of the Central Committee, and Head of the general political management of the Bulgarian Army, stated that "I am deeply convinced it was not through a regular way that Todor Zhivkov reached the highest position in the party. I am sure that in our party there are at least five hundred people like him." However, despite the insistence of many participants on serious "organizational outcomes" for Politburo members, who actively participated in the repression and in establishing Chervenkov's cult of personality, the management of the April Plenum categorically protected the compromise they reached just a few days before. Valko Chervenkov thus remained a member of the Politburo and only resigned from the position of Prime Minister, to be succeeded by Anton Yugov.<sup>7</sup> Former head of State Security and former Minister of the Interior Rusi Hristosov became a Chairman of the State Plan Commission, and Georgi Tsankov, who replaced Hristosov in 1951, kept his position as Minister of the Interior.

At the April Plenum of 1956, a decision was approved to establish a commission for the "investigation of the case of Traicho Kostov" and the trials related to him, headed by Politburo member Dimitar Ganev. The commission surveyed Valko Chervenkov and several prominent officials at the Ministry of the Interior, including Rusi Hristosov, Ivan Raikov, Hristo Boev, Apostol Kolchev and Georgi Kumbilev. Indicative of the current state of affairs is how during the investigation, these officials fully blamed the Soviet "advisors" for the arrests and torture of prisoners to exonerate themselves.<sup>8</sup> The commission later issued a

7 It is not by chance that Valko Chervenkov was gradually pushed out of the positions he occupied. We can find the explanation in Todor Zhivkov's speech delivered on November 4, 1962, in which he stated that "a lot of our guiding comrades (...) are concerned by the question (...) why didn't our party and party leadership make all necessary conclusions at the April Plenum? I shall respond immediately – because there was a lack of unity in the party leadership..." Central State Archives, ф. 1Б, on. 5, а.е. 553, л. 122–127.

8 Years later, on his way of establishing his monopoly on power on November 4, 1962, at the plenum of the CC, Todor Zhivkov shared a revealing report from the Twenty-Second Congress of CPSU in the spirit of Khrushchev's Secret Speech, with a proposal for taking all state and party position from Valko Chervenkov,

thorough report and a proposal for judicial rehabilitation (but not a party one) of the majority of victims in the Traicho Kostov case.

The decisions of the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU, and the subsequent resolution of the Plenum of the Central Committee of the BCP in April 1956, garnered much public interest and gave rise to timid hopes for some liberalization and democratization of the political system, but Bulgarian leadership regarded the public reaction as threatening and acted accordingly. Lively discussions started amongst journalists, writers, scientists and students about the situation of socialist countries around the world and the possibility of change in Bulgaria. However, on May 20, 1956, the limits of potential social debate on the vigilantly controlled "new political line" were set by a threatening editorial of the newspaper of the BCP, *Rabotnichesko Delo* ['Workers' Deed'], titled "For the Right Activity of the Party, Against Petty Bourgeois Licentiousness." At the Plenum of the Central Committee of the BCP at the beginning of September 1956, all unsanctioned public discussions for further democratization were unequivocally condemned as "rotten liberalism." Even the October riots in Poland and the armed anti-communist rebellion in Hungary served to curb initiatives for political reform, since these events excited the Bulgarian public, but few dared express their opinion. One of the few was a poet from Plovdiv called Jordan Ruskov, who wrote a poem under the pseudonym Rumén Drúmev titled "Cry for Freedom," which he dedicated to the Hungarian revolution. For this daring act, after a two-year investigation by the State Security authorities, Ruskov was arrested and sentenced to seven years in prison.

As a last resort, the Bulgarian communist regime reacted to the arising complications of the domestic political situation with a sudden

Anton Yugov, and the former heads of the Ministry of the Interior and State Security Rusi Hristozov, Georgi Tsankov, Ivan Raikov, Georgi Kumbiliev, and Apostol Kolchev, who were accused of "violations of the socialist legality during the cult of personality." Central State Archives, ф. 1Б, оп. 5, а.е. 553, л. 128-131. The de-Stalinization process essentially turned into a heated inner-party rivalry. It is interesting to note that when this process ended in 1962, a new cult of personality was born that did not go unnoticed by the contemporaries.

harsh clampdown. They reopened the Belene labor camp,<sup>9</sup> launched a campaign for the elimination of "hostile elements," and mobilized the Workers' Militia to defend the "power of the people" from potential counterrevolutionary actions. Indicative is the statement of First Secretary Todor Zhivkov delivered to service officers on November 5, 1956 regarding the role of the State Security and the Militia: "The arms were given to the officers of the State Security and Militia in order to use them steadfastly against all counter-revolutionary attempts. The Militia and the State Security authorities are not Apostle Paul, but the switch that strikes all dogs who try to bite."<sup>10</sup>

In view of the actions of Bulgarian leadership, we may conclude that there are two main pillars that can artificially uphold a cult of personality: propaganda and repression. Among those loyal to the system, political propaganda had huge influence and power the extent of which we cannot even fathom. However, where propaganda was powerless, security authorities used violence and repression to eradicate whatever might hinder the implementation of leadership policies. It is important to note at this point that the above conclusion does not come from academic scholarship on totalitarian regimes, but from Colonel General Georgi Tsankov, Minister of the Interior and member of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the BCP. At a meeting on May 3, 1956, Tsankov delivered a speech to the leadership of the Ministry of the Interior where members discussed the activities of State Security in light of the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU. Tsankov stated that "in order to consolidate the cult of personality, State Security authorities persecuted hundreds of the thousands of party members and cadres, and a great number of them were even exposed to humiliation."<sup>11</sup> Tsankov's statement is vague, but if members and supporters of the Communist Party were exposed to humiliation, we can only imagine what happened to dissident and suspicious persons outside the party. The minutes from the meetings

<sup>9</sup> Reopened on December 22, 1956 by order of Deputy Minister Apostol Kolchev.

АКРДОПБГДСРСБНА-М, ф. 1, оп. 11, а. е. 28, л. 312-313.

<sup>10</sup> АКРДОПБГДСРСБНА-М, ф. 1, оп. 1, а. е. 3686, л. 32-34.

<sup>11</sup> АКРДОПБГДСРСБНА-М, ф. 1, оп. 2, а. е. 208, л. 1-23.

of the Minister of Interior with the officers of the Ministry and State Security in 1956 is telling of the general atmosphere at the Ministry, and the confusion among the regular and even among the superior officers of the system due to the newly introduced policies. The awkward questions addressed to the leadership of the Ministry and to the Minister personally also show that there was a lot of work to be done, mainly issuing propaganda concerning the liquidation of the cult of personality and its consequences. In any case, the Ministry of the Interior and the services unquestioningly followed the policies set by the Politburo of the Central Committee of the BCP, as evidenced in most documents of the services.

At the beginning of 2015, the Commission (COMDOS) presented the documentary collection *De-Stalinization: The Dilemma of a Controversial Decade (1953–1964)*, co-issued with the State Agency Archives, which served as a basis of the present report. The majority of documents featured in the documentary were published for the first time and mark the most interesting events and processes that took place in Bulgaria, which allows us to view the internal party struggles from the perspective of rivalry between members of the Central Committee of the BCP for control over political resources and power. The documents show how party leadership focused extensively on the actions of the opposition in order to dissolve some of the tension in their ranks, and allow us to track the process of gradually returning to a watered down version of Chervenkov's cult of personality. They also document the process of rehabilitation of victims and the systematic renewal of repression in Bulgaria. In that respect, the attitudes and opinions of the Bulgarian public can be gleaned from the documents of the persecuted victims, whether they were members of the party, mere supporters, or persons defined as "hostile elements."

In conclusion, fear of change and the necessity of repressing the Bulgarian public forced communist leadership to curb the process of de-Stalinization and set limits on the internal struggle against the cult of personality fostered by Chervenkov's government. In other words, in order to remain in power, party leadership basically reduced the process of de-Stalinization to a series of superficial changes and largely empty rhetoric on new policies that were ultimately disregarded.

*In Lieu of an Epilogue*

GYÖRGY GYARMATI

"The Thaw" Through the Eyes  
of a Hungarian Writer

*Sándor Márai's Chronicles of the Beginnings  
of Hungarian Post-Stalinism*

This paper raises the question of how the Hungarian political transition from Stalinism to post-Stalinism was perceived and interpreted by contemporary intellectuals who had emigrated to the "free world" of the West. For instance, it was the idea of communism turned vile in practice that caused Hungarian writer István Eörsi to become an apostate right around the time of Stalin's physical departure to the Great Beyond. Decades later, Eörsi noted with an air of self-evidence, rather than want, that Polish writer "[Witold] Gombrowicz was also a *homo politicus*, (...) yet despite producing a thousand pages, he had never once reflected on contemporary political events in his diary. He had never written down Stalin's name, not even in the year of his death."<sup>1</sup> Gombrowicz might not have reacted to current political events on a daily basis, but this did not mean that he never discussed the hardships suffered under the communist yoke. In his diary entries from 1956, as a man "specialized in freedom," Gombrowicz took a firm

1 Eörsi, István. 1994. *Időm Gombrowiczcsal* ['My Time with Gombrowicz']. Budapest: Pesti Szalon Könyvkiadó, p. 98.

stance in articulating his criticism of the post-Stalinist period, and retrospectively reflected, among other things, on the developments in Poland following the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.<sup>2</sup> Last but not least, the subject of this paper, Hungarian writer Sándor Márai was no less renowned a writer or political thinker than his contemporaries mentioned above, though we must bear in mind that ranking prestigious literary persons is for the most part a subjective and quibbling hobby – as the saying goes, *De gustibus non est disputandum*. Similarly to Gombrowicz, Márai also emigrated overseas; however, unlike his contemporaries, his removal from Hungary also inspired a switch in genres from literary works to political journalism.

In the 1950's, with half a century and some fifty volumes of *belles lettres* under his belt, Sándor Márai became, for half a decade, a diligent annalist of the Hungarian edition of Radio Free Europe. In his broadcasts titled *Fedőneve: Ulysses* ['Code Name: Ulysses'], he primarily recorded the excesses of Stalin in his final years, and what Márai perceived to be a period of "spring" following the Soviet dictator's death. A true polyglot armed with diverse information and the contemporary terminology of journalism, Márai systematically traced the events of the global stage of the Cold War, in particular the developments in the Soviet Union and the satellite states lying west of its borders, and aimed to present the nightmarish reign of the communist regime plainly and without euphemisms, while maintaining his usual high standards of sophisticated academic prose with literary essay undertones. Each week, he reached into the news basket of the world under Moscow's rule, and either inserted his chosen piece into an arrangement of simultaneous events, or embedded it into cultural or sociohistorical tableaux. Those with a penchant for categorizing genres would call these short works *feuilletons*, which at the time were repeatedly broadcasted through the ether as "Sunday news desserts."<sup>3</sup>

2 Gombrowicz, Witold. 2000. *Napló, 1953–1956* ['Diary, 1953–1956']. Pozsony: Kalligram Könyvkiadó, pp. 389–435.

3 Márai, Sándor. 2014. *Fedőneve: Ulysses I. (1951–1953)* ['Code Name: Ulysses, Vol.

As this paper focuses on the post-Stalinist period from Márai's perspective, I should only discuss publications written after the spring of 1953; however, some of Márai's earlier reflections from the period immediately preceding Stalin's death are also worth examining. Consider the following excerpt from the spring of 1952, when the sixtieth anniversary of the birth of Mátyás Rákosi, the Hungarian regent of Moscow, triggered an avalanche of "nationwide" celebrations:

"Following the loss of the Second World War, under the protection of the bayonets of the Red Army, a communist arrived to Hungary from Moscow, who upon silencing the democratic will of the Hungarian nation with brute force, had seized unlimited and unconditional power in the country over the living and the dead, over bodies and souls. This man, again owing to the protection of the Russian bayonets, has reached his sixtieth birthday unharmed and in good health. During the seven years that led to this moment, the Hungarian nation has lost its national autonomy, its democratic institutions have been eliminated, its ancient ways of life have been uprooted, hundreds of thousands of its people have been forced into exile, the standard of living of working Hungarian society has been reduced at a hitherto unprecedented rate to the level of forced laborers, and the material wealth of the nation has been transported to the Soviet or bartered away abroad to acquire currency for the Soviet arms race. (...) The country has become a military base for the Soviet, our work force has been coerced into realizing the military plans of a foreign power, tens of thousands of decent and innocent people have been locked away in concentration camps, and Hungarian citizens have been sent to the gallows. And when Rákosi reached that milestone of sixty years, Hungarian writers seized their lyres, their fountains-pens, and their typewriters, to celebrate the man who had committed

1 (1951-1953)']. Budapest: Helikon Kiadó; and Márai, Sándor. 2017. *Fedőneve: Ulysses II. (1954-1955)* ['Code Name: Ulysses, Vol. II (1954-1955)']. Budapest: Helikon Kiadó. As these two volumes are cited several times in this paper, I shall provide the volume and page number for each citation, and include the date of the broadcast where it is relevant.

all these crimes. (...) These odes to Rákosi, proclaimed to the world with such unbridled effusion by this generation of Hungarian writers, are impossible to explain by anything other than a sort of literary schizophrenia. It is beyond belief that poets, and talented ones to boot, would voluntarily demean themselves to this servile role. (...) We cannot assume that they would voluntarily surrender their and the nation's honor without the coercion of outside influence." (May 4, 1952; Vol. I, pp. 165–168.)

Two weeks after Stalin's death, Márai noted how the previously static global situation became dynamic in the arrival of a political spring: "We can feel with our every nerve that something is happening after the frigidity of the (Cold War) winter: spring has come" (March 22, 1953; Vol. I, pp. 396–399.) Two months later, he proceeded to add that "[t]he *Thermidor* is over, (...) the period of the temporary directory of the Berijas, Malenkovs, and Molotovs, (...) the degradation process of the temporary or final mythos of Stalin (...) is upon us" (May 24, 1953; Vol. I, pp. 438–440.) Márai then traced the new phase of the "Cold War entering into the thaw," in which world leaders attempted to reorchestrate the Cold War "to the tune of a Cold Peace" (July 5, 1953; Vol. I, pp. 466–467),<sup>4</sup> which entailed, among other things, the (partial) opening of forced labor camps, the foregrounding of collective leadership, the increased production of consumer goods, and the improvement of public services. Regarding the Hungarian situation, Márai did note that the political shift – including the mitigation of the collectivization process – was the opposite of everything that "the Wise Teacher of the Hungarian People [Rákosi] had forced upon the Hungarian people," but had his reservations

4 "The thaw," which became an emblematic denominator of the period following Stalin's death, first entered public consciousness after the publication of Ilya Ehrenburg's novel of the same name. It is important to note, however, that its first sequel was only published a year later in 1954, in the fifth issue of the Russian literary magazine *Znamya*, and the novel was only published in Hungary in 1956 by Új Magyar Könyvkiadó. See Stikalin, Aleksandr. 2007. "Ilja Ehrenburg és az 1956-os magyarországi események" [*Ilya Ehrenburg and the Hungarian Events of 1956*]. *Múltunk*, 2007 (1), pp. 4–25.



about the "New Course" policies of Prime Minister Imre Nagy (August 2, 1953; Vol. I, pp. 483-484.)

In the last week of August 1953, Márai explained his reservations about the Hungarian "New Course" by composing a satire of the alleged retirement of Mátyás Rákosi, saying that behind the scenes, Rákosi would continue to cling tooth and nail to his nation-conducting baton.

"I know very well what all of you down in the depths think of me. You believe I shrank away from the stage; that I had to relinquish the leading role to my successors. You think it might do well to keep an eye on me, because even now, when I am no longer officially the Prime Minister, and have somewhat retired to the shadows as per the agreement with Moscow, I might still pose a threat from the background, should the political situation change someday. I know you despise me because I am an alien, because for eight years, I was the ruler of life and death in this country, because I am small and fat and bald, because only under the protection of the Russian bayonets could I force upon you all that you had suffered in the past eight years. I know you call me Tom Thumb<sup>5</sup> behind my back, I watched and observed as you gritted your teeth in silence and endured what I had forced upon you by the will of the Russian bayonets.

You endured when I administered you tyranny labeled as "socialism" in such doses as if my victims were not even live human beings, but animals in an experiment. Now you are hoping that I have been cast aside, because the Soviet shall construct retreating bridges in all the captive countries for a general period of retreat, for the duration of the Austrian peace. You believe that due to the events in East Germany, we are also under severe pressure in this time of danger to partially or actually undo a lot of things: the collectives, the state commerce, the artificially inflated heavy war industry, the deportations, and the internment camps I stuffed to the brim with those who had got in my way, or were not to my liking.

5 The Hungarian equivalent of Tom Thumb is *Hüvelyk Matyi*, where Matyi is the diminutive of the name Mátyás, hence the fitting nickname.

You believe so, and there is some truth in there. But there is something you do not know, no matter what you are hoping for: you do not know that I still have the Power. (...)

Power is great. Perhaps it is even more exciting this way, in the shadows, than it was when I was officially on display. If I pick up this receiver, my employee the Prime Minister shall mindlessly rush to my side. This button summons the State Security Authority, this one the Minister of Police, this one the army, and if I press any of these buttons, everyone shall rush to do my bidding, because I have the Power. On this phone, I can call Moscow directly; this other one summons the local military commander of the Soviet armed forces; and tanks, cannons, and airplanes shall be on the move if I, the Gray Eminence, deem that the time has come. The war of succession in Moscow shall eventually come to an end, and I, who has always bet on the right horse, shall remain in power" (August 23, 1953; Vol. I, pp. 495-498.)

Márai ends his satire of Rákosi with a self-indulgent punchline, where the secretly high-ranking leader keeps pushing the buttons in vain, for nobody rushes to his side for an audience, and the Soviet Big Brother never picks up the receiver. "At that moment, the Powerful Man understood that something had happened: Power had slipped away from him. Now he was just a fat and bald man and nothing more" (Vol. I, p. 498.) Although three more years came to pass before Rákosi truly was dismissed in the summer of 1956 by the Soviet party presidium, Márai's prognosis delivered on the "information airway" did help preserve hope that Moscow's protection, which was generally considered the *ultima ratio* during Rákosi's reign, had become less stable without – and after – Stalin.

Márai might seem inconsistent when he dubs the new political developments unfolding under the "guiding principles of collective leadership" a mere "rearrangement of the display," a "systematically planned retreat," or even the decomposition process of Stalin's political crops. Márai himself attributes his stance to the ever-changing composition of the personal alliances of Stalin's successors

– what Roy Medvedev referred to as triumvirates –,<sup>6</sup> which signaled that the course of the post-Stalinist reorganization had not been decided yet. Although Berija was removed from the stage the old-fashioned way (with a bullet to the head) by his fellow successors in a fit of camaraderie brought on by acute fear, the treacherous race for the position of Number One continued within the internal ranks of political leadership, for it had always been an immanent aspect of the system. In the summer of 1954, while Márai's political seismograph was tracing the contours of the "new corporate leadership," he registered that Khrushchev seemed to rise to the foreground instead of Malenkov, to whom Márai had hitherto shown preference in his radio journalism (June 13, 1954; Vol. II, pp. 121–123, and 144–146.) Some months later, Márai repeated himself, this time in the declarative: "In Moscow, the Khrushchev line has grown stronger" (February 27, 1955; Vol. II, p. 296.)

Following the deployment of hydrogen bombs by the global superpowers, and the ensuring nuclear stalemate, Márai methodically studied the developments of their careful attempts at negotiation, from the Korean Armistice Agreement, through the conferences in Paris and Geneva, to the cooperative organization of non-aligned states, followed a mere two months later by the signing of the Austrian State Treaty in 1955. Márai's reflections on that last item merit a brief detour:

"The news of the approaching and probable conclusion of the Austrian State Treaty gives hope that following this treaty, the Soviet shall withdraw the red troops that have been loitering in Hungary and Romania for ten years under the guise of securing their connecting routes. Another source of hope is that following the reorganization of power, Hungarian Bolshevik leadership might be forced to retreat and change tactics. If the Austrian State Treaty is concluded, the Iron Curtain will be pushed further East, and the borders of power might be furled from the bridge in Enns all the way to Hegyeshalom. (...)

6 Medvedev, Roy. 1989. *Hruscsov. Politikai életrajz* ['Khrushchev: A Political Biography']. Budapest: Laude Kiadó, pp. 77–105.

Then the West to which we belong, of which we have been an integral, structural part for a millennium, will once again begin at our borders." (May 8, 1955; Vol. II, pp. 341–342.)

For the rest of 1955, Márai's vision of the withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Hungary remained a recurring motif in his publications. Regarding this subject, he either scorned the "covenant" of the Warsaw Pact or preferred to ignore it completely, but on the occasion that he did acknowledge it, he argued that the pact was not a respectable legal basis for the continued stationing of the Soviet troops.

"In their howling and mewling fear, Rákosi and company are doing everything in their power to detain their vital protective force in Hungary, but there is substantial hope that their attempts will remain fruitless. (...) The gears of the grand mechanism may creak, but they have begun to turn, the wheels are rolling backwards, and the Russians must withdraw from Europe." (September 4, 1955; Vol. II, pp. 421–422.)

When we examine Márai's statements, we may conclude that his pen was governed by his own personal wishes, and we would probably be right; however, as his reflections were broadcasted to a growing number of Hungarian listeners of the localized version of Radio Free Europe, the subjectivism with which he appealed to this demographic was a conscious choice to keep the hope of liberation alive. Fortunately, by that time, these hopes were further fueled by the hundreds of thousands of fliers dispensed by balloons from the West.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> According to a report issued in the spring of 1955 by Minister of the Interior László Piros, in the previous year, the balloons carried by the air currents "scattered over one million fliers across the territory of our homeland." See the documents of the April 13, 1955 session of the College of the Ministry of the Interior in Kajári, Erzsébet, Gyarmati, György and S. Varga, Katalin (eds.) 2005. *A Belügyminisztérium Kollégiumának ülései, 1953–1956* ["Sessions of the College of the Ministry of the Interior, 1953–1956"]. Volume II. Budapest: ÁBTL, p. 496. See also Révész, Béla. 1996. *Manipulációs technikák a hidegháború korai időszakában. Magyarország és a Szabad Európa Rádió 1950–1956* ["Manipulation Tactics in the Early State of the Cold

Let us briefly return to a broadcast from February 1955, where Márai discussed his skepticism regarding the Hungarian "spring buzz" of the summer of 1953:

"(...) no matter what Imre Nagy promises in the name of the New Course, they don't believe a single word of the representatives of this system. This is why Rákosi smiled and applauded Prime Minister Imre Nagy in parliament when the latter announced that the previous communist economic and social policies failed; because Rákosi knew that this system would be just as incapable of producing butter as it was incapable of producing steel and coal. As soon as this fact manifests itself, they will have to figure out some excuse to return to the policy of forced heavy industrial production, because this will be the only way of conceal the failure of the New Course, which had just as little power and means to produce consumer goods as it did in the period of forced heavy industrialization, when it was unable to produce steel, coal, or energy." (February 27, 1955; Vol. II, pp. 297-298.)

It is important to note the date of the above cited broadcast, because a week after Márai's contemporaries had heard it across the ether, in early March, 1955, Mátyás Rákosi, who had recently returned from Moscow, (might have) leveled hysterical criticism at the hitherto official "New Course," and on account of "leaning right" in his policies, the dismissal of Prime Minister Imre Nagy was also imminent.<sup>8</sup>

War: Hungary and Radio Free Europe, 1950-1956']. Szeged: JATE ÁJK; and Simándi, Irén. 2005. *Magyarország a Szabad Európa Rádió hullámhosszán, 1951-1956* ['Hungary on the Wave-length of Radio Free Europe, 1951-1956']. Budapest: OSZK - Gondolat Kiadó. At the time, Márai began to contemplate the reunification of Germany, which he envisioned as a sort of domino effect of the Austrian State Treaty. He of course added that "We do not know the way or the date, (...) but if Germany is reunited one day, this reality will rattle the entire Iron Curtain" (August 28, 1955; Vol. II, pp. 418-419.)

- <sup>8</sup> The only reason Imre Nagy was not dismissed immediately was that as part of a series of events organized for the tenth anniversary of Hungary's "liberation" (April 4, 1955), "Prime Minister Imre Nagy" had been scheduled to appear at several venues. However, within ten days of these protocol events, Rákosi finalized his decision to exclude Imre Nagy from the Political Committee of the

Márai's cold and distant treatment of the "New Course" of Imre Nagy might be cause for historiographic concern, but his stance is understandable if we consider Márai's situation, and the fact that the official classification of October 1956 as a revolution caused a retrospective "reevaluation" of the previous three years as the period leading directly to the Hungarian Revolution of 1956.<sup>9</sup> In fact, many an authoritative work on the Hungarian Revolution begins with, "On March 5, 1953, Stalin died. (...)" As a contemporary committing his reports to paper, Márai himself was astonished by this development and the dynamic changes that followed it, but from beginning to end, he was able to view these events within a much wider context. In the West, his portion of the global press had become sufficiently diverse, and each week, he had the opportunity to sample this kaleidoscopic pile of information as he pleased; therefore, we may absolve him from not concerning himself with "models" or structuralist typifications of the conglomerate formed by the Soviet Union and its protectorates. As time passed, retrospective historical research naturally resulted in dating the divergence of the various satellite states from the Stalinist model to the years following Stalin's death. I hesitate to speak of "national communism" here because it was precisely Moscow's excommunication of Tito's Yugoslavia that rendered these already existing differences taboo. On the other hand, it was only in the post-Stalinist years – even before 1956 – that Stalinist uniformity crumbled and the different forms of national or state socialisms became more tangible.<sup>10</sup>

Márai's stance on the "New Course" is further explained by his priorities as a political journalist, who supported the return of

Hungarian Workers' Party and from the Central Leadership, and also dismissed him from his position as Head of State and Government.

<sup>9</sup> To use an allegory from 1848, a hundred years later, the "New Course" had become the new *Vormärz*, the period preceding the 1848 March Revolution in the states of the German Confederation.

<sup>10</sup> Due to spatial constraints, this paper shall not discuss the "unique path" of Chinese communism, which diverged from the Stalinist model from the very beginning, but with regard to the historical period and focus of this paper, it is interesting to note that even after Stalin's death, Albania and Romania barely showed any signs of change that could be classified as a product of the de-Stalinization process.

the sovereignty and national autonomy of the satellite states, and rejected all forms of communism, and therefore did not bother with distinctions between "better or worse" forms of communist leadership. In his publications, Márai often quoted the paragraphs of the Atlantic Charter, which informed almost all of his historical discussions – in comparison, news of the de-Stalinization process of the Hungarian "New Course" simply failed to meet his expectations, despite the fact that within the vast conglomerate of satellite states, Hungary showed the most spectacular developments by far. It is interesting to note that as a contemporary following the events of between 1951 and 1955, Márai produced a journalistic chronicle spanning over a thousand pages, in which he used every concept standardized by the politological analyses and historical accounts of the time, all the way to the Swiss–Austrian "Alpine deadlock" separating the northern and southern wings of the NATO, yet one linguistic trope remained conspicuously absent from Márai's encyclopedia of the era, despite the fact that it emerged at that time and was parroted in the countries of the Soviet Bloc for years: the idea of "the restoration of socialist legality." The absence of this phrase was hardly a coincidence, of course, for what was there to "restore" when socialist legality had never existed?

Following Imre Nagy's dismissal, Márai argued that Rákosi might have seemingly seized full power, but his position had not been consolidated yet on account of the informed resistance of the Hungarian people:

"Rákosi is not a dictator, but a ruthless, cunning, and cruel employee, who currently lies low and waits for the moment when the new dictator of Moscow will seize true power and consolidate their rule for a while. (...) But today the people know – and they know in no small part due to being informed on the radio – that in other regions of the world, empowered by other social systems, their contemporaries are able to achieve within their own lifetimes what dictators have been promising to our great-grandchildren. (...) Today the masses are better informed than they have ever been in the course of history. The masses know they have a powerful weapon against the dictatorship: conscious, daily resistance. (...) If every person, every

day, in every place where violence reigns and threatens us, in every place of employment, in their private lives and in the public sphere, consciously realizes resistance without carelessly endangering their own personal safety, then there is serious hope that in this new phase of the Cold War, the dictatorship shaken by internal crises, economic disasters, power struggles, and the new global political order will find itself in a situation where it must retreat and negotiate." (March 20-27, 1955; Vol. II, pp. 313-317.)

In April 1955, while Hungarian leadership was busy celebrating the tenth jubilee of the beginning of a "beautiful new world," on the other side of the ocean, the prisms of Márai's journalistic periscope produced a completely different picture:

"After ten years, the Bolshevik system enters a new era of cruel and senseless mendacity. The Bolsheviks are currently burying the seemingly gentler and more humane experiment of the past eighteen months, once dubbed the New Course. Soon the scapegoats will disappear, and in their place, the new nightmares of the Stalinist slavery will appear: peasants pressured into collective production, workers coerced into heavy industrial production and poorly paid forced labor, intellectuals who had once been duped into assuming a more bourgeois behavior, then stripped of all their material and spiritual reserves; these are the nightmares of the new police terrorism, of the reinstated literary, artistic, and intellectual terror. (...) In the past ten years, the people learned that the state, which demands public order and social fairness from its subjects, does not keep its word, and laughs as it steals back everything the working man has earned with cruel and hard labor. The forced loans, the false "real wages," the five-year plans built on the exploitation of labor, all of this was an act of plundering, an attack on all citizens." (April 1955; Vol. II, pp. 321-329.)

In the reflections of Márai's *Ulysses*, the recurring theme of political and politician scandals is often joined by another, "the anonymous, ... non-political" everyman, who has just experienced yet another



variation of system-conformist depravity, or is pondering the fatalism of "this could happen to me, too." It was primarily in reference to people forced onto the margins that Márai coined the slang-inspired phrase, "the institutionalized hassle eating up their everyday lives," which became the author's umbrella term for phenomena that affected a large portion of simple Hungarian mortals, and were specifically designed by the system to wage war on the people's morale. *Institutionalized hassle* could refer to anything from having to stand in line in front of stores due to the perpetual shortage of consumer goods, or the surrenders and requisitions, to the subscription of "peace loans," the obligatory daily duty of reading the Communist Party's press releases – called the "thirty minutes of *Szabad Nép*" ['Free People'] –, or the equally obligatory "Ready to Work and Fight" movement (*Munkára, Harcra Kész!*, MHK). The latter assumed the paramilitary form of spartakiads between various schools, factories, and settlements, which were primarily aimed at controlling the leisure hours of younger generations. Nevertheless, the system's objective of forging a new community proved counterproductive, and only fanned the flames of social resistance and aversion towards the communist regime, or in Márai's words of prayer, "Lord, let us not make peace with oppression." (Vol. I, pp. 181–182, and 549–560.)

In the fall of 1955, Márai's broadcasts of his indirect impressions of the general low mood of the Hungarian people took a descriptive turn towards the admiration of their resistance. While he spent most of the year penning vitriolic accounts of Rákosi's machinations aimed at the re-Stalinization of Hungary, in a broadcast from October, Márai briefly stopped to marvel at "the courage" of the "man on the street:"

"After a decade of terror and intimidation, the Hungarian people talk fearlessly to any Western strangers in their path of what is really happening in everyday life behind the Potemkin screens of popular democratic tourism. (...) The tourists returning to the West then talk of how the Hungarian people's mood is low, but they also talk of how the locals are keen and precise in their perception of the weak points of the Soviet and the satellite states within the global political situation. They talk of how the efforts of Rákosi and company have shattered

in the face of the national pride of the Hungarian people, and how unsuccessful they were in raising the nation into a mass proletariat. (...) The tourists see a people that suffer, but are not afraid." (October 9, 1955; Vol. II, pp. 447-448.)

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When we consider that Sándor Márai's reviews of the Hungarian political situation were broadcasted by Radio Free Europe on a weekly basis, it is striking that Rákosi's State Security Authority (*Államvédelmi Hatóság, ÁVH*), which wasted so much energy on the surveillance and infiltration of immigrant organizations, was unable to identify the author of the broadcasts. To be fair, the spies of Gábor Péter – or from 1953 onwards, László Piros – would have scoured Munich and its English Garden in vain, because until spring of 1952, Márai dispatched his "Sunday Chronicles" to the Bavarian capital from Posillipo in Naples, and afterwards from New York. Remarkably, a perfectly identifiable manuscript – sent to Budapest by air mail from the other side of the ocean, presumably after it had been smuggled out of the editorial office right after the broadcast<sup>11</sup> – was found in one of the dossiers now kept at the Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security. The manuscript in question, dated June 26, 1953, was found in an envelope labeled "New York;" the header of the review was addressed to the Hungarian Department of Radio Free Europe, and contained the author's real name; the introduction continued the

<sup>11</sup> Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security (henceforth: ÁBTL), 3.2.4. K-1423. Dossier of Gyula Dessewffy (Radio Free Europe). The manuscript in question was actually broadcasted on July 12, 1953, and can be found under the same date in *Code Name: Ulysses*, Vol. I, pp. 467-471. In the same envelope, the author also included another manuscript, a review of Virginia Cowles' book *Winston Churchill: The Era and the Man*. This was probably intended for another segment of the Hungarian edition of Radio Free Europe, as indicated by the header of the review, "Book of the Week." However, instead of "Ulysses," Márai used the name "Candidus" for his submissions for this segment. See Borbándi, Gyula. 1985. *A magyar emigráció életrajza, 1945-1985* ['Biography of the Hungarian Emigration, 1945-1985']. Budapest: Európa Könyvkiadó, p. 243. The review can be found at the ÁBTL at the above designated location.

name "Ulysses;" and the typewritten pages were corrected by hand and also signed by the author himself, yet there were no tangible consequences. Even more astonishing is the fact that two years later, in July 1955, the Military Counterintelligence Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior issued a detailed report of the organization, operation, preferred genres, and permanent staff of Radio Free Europe, yet Márai's name was once again nowhere to be seen. The report even included branches broadcasting from other parts of the world, and descriptions of the physiognomy of certain employees to facilitate identification, but all we could find was a figure named "Ulises" [sic] identified by the authorities as "László Papp," who might have been the "voice" of Márai's writing, the man behind Radio Free Europe's microphone.<sup>12</sup>

From a report issued in October 1954 by Hungarian state security agent "Polgár," it appears that the authorities had known Márai was a "dissident" writer living in New York, whose poem *Halotti Beszéd* ['Funeral Sermon'] "was first recited in the voice of Radio Free Europe" – and at the time was being distributed among the Hungarian population in typewritten form –, but once again, no connections were made between Márai and "Ulysses."<sup>13</sup> According to Gyula Borbándi, contrary to the (dis)information of Agent "Polgár," *Funeral Sermon* first appeared in printed form in 1951, in the second issue of the immigrant journal *Látóhatár* ['Horizon'] published in Munich. In fact, in the somewhat lax atmosphere of the "New Course," Hungarian writer Áron Tamási was allowed to publicly reflect on the poem in a Hungarian literary radio broadcast.<sup>14</sup> This technically confirms that Márai was not associated with "Ulysses" of Radio Free Europe until 1956; otherwise, somewhat lax "New Course" or not, Áron Tamási would not have been allowed to engage in meta-literary dialogue through the ether with "the anti-

12 ÁBTL, 4.1. A-1315. Information on Radio Free Europe. Published in Révész, Béla. 1997. *A proletárdiktatúra ideológiai funkciójának kriminalizálása* ['The Criminalization of the Ideological Function of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat']. Szeged: JATE ÁJK, pp. 111–141.

13 ÁBTL, 3.1.5. O-11959. Report of Agent "Polgár" in the dossier titled "Lombardisták" ['Lombardics'].

14 Borbándi 1985, op. cit., pp. 259–261.

communist and anti-Soviet literary functionary of Radio Free Europe.”<sup>15</sup> This particular phrase appeared in the investigation documents pertaining to “acts of sabotage during the counterrevolution” that were allegedly committed by the leaders of the Workers’ Council of the Hunnia Film Studio during the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. In this instance, Márai was slandered on account of being related to renowned film director Géza Radványi, but the authorities were mistaken once again, as Márai had always been a seasonal “outside colleague” of Radio Free Europe, and his “correspondence” only became more scarce from the late 1950’s and early 1960’s.

Let us return briefly to the literary discourse that started in 1954 between Márai and Tamási on account of Márai’s poem, *Funeral Sermon*. Their dialogue, which began on “different wave-lengths” in more ways than just the frequency of their respective radio broadcasts, eventually continued in writing when Tamási published his reflections in the May issue of the Budapest journal *Művelt Nép* [‘Educated People’], and Márai responded in the journal *Látóhatár*. When his fellow writer criticized the pessimistic tone of *Funeral Sermon*, Márai defended himself by saying that the poem was written at the start of the decade, during the lowest point of his Cold War depression, when “we were homesick just thinking about our fellow Hungarians writers, who had the means of listening to the broadcast in our homeland and in our mother tongue. I am certain I would not write such a poem today. [At the same time] I also cannot preach false optimism and excessively cheerful promises. (...) There shall be no peace and no compromises until the Soviet returns the freedom of the captive peoples, including the freedom of my country.”<sup>16</sup> As we have seen earlier, the tone of the chronicles of “Ulysses” was always in line with this principle.

I shall conclude with an anecdote, according to which in 1952, six months before moving to the United States, Márai visited the elderly and much respected philosopher, historian, and politician Benedetto Croce in Naples. When Márai asked Croce how he had survived

15 ÁBTL, 4.1. A-1024. Dossier “Hunnia Filmstúdió” [‘Hunnia Film Studio’].

16 Tamási, Áron and Márai, Sándor. 1954. “Vita a hazáról” [‘Debate about the Homeland’]. *Látóhatár*, July–August, pp. 193–197.

the decades of Mussolini's reign, despite the fact that he openly considered fascism a form of moral paralysis, the Italian senator replied, "they allowed me to stay quiet against them" (December 14, 1952; Vol. I, p. 322.) To paraphrase Croce, we might say that during the next few years of tyranny and the reign of Stalin's Hungarian lackeys, Márai "allowed himself to speak against them" – though he did so from a safe distance and with civil modesty, and just loudly enough to reach his target audience in Hungary. When we consider Márai's unwavering patriotism fueled by homesickness, we need not wonder why Stalin's death had no particular effect on his views. He of course acknowledged the rhapsodic changes that followed, but as post-Stalinist "collective leadership" refused to let Hungary out of the stocks of the Soviet empire, Márai, like Gombrowicz, opted to remain a man "specialized in freedom." Beyond the reasons discussed above, his desire for true autonomy might best explain why Márai had so little respect for the de-Stalinization process, and the Hungarian "New Course" of Imre Nagy.

*Translated by Éva Misits*



## Abbreviations

ABS	Archiv bezpečnostních složek [Archives of the State Security Services] (Czech Republic)
ÁBTL	Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok Történeti Levéltára [Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security] (Hungary)
BCP	Bulgarian Communist Party [Balgarska Komunisticheska Partiya, BKP]
BM Koll.	Belügyminisztérium Kollégiuma [College of the Ministry of the Interior] (Hungary)
BStU	Des Bundesbeauftragten für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik [The Federal Commissioner for the Records of the State Security Service of the former German Democratic Republic]
BZNS	Bălgarski Zemedelski Naroden Săjuz [Bulgarian Agrarian People's Union]
COMDOS	Комисията за разкриване на документите и обявяване на принадлежност на български граждани към Държавна сигурност и Разузнавателните служби на Българската Народна Армия [The Committee for disclosing the documents and announcing affiliation of Bulgarian citizens to the State Security and intelligence services of the Bulgarian national Army]
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union [Kommunisticheskaya Partiya Sovetskogo Soyuza, KPSS]

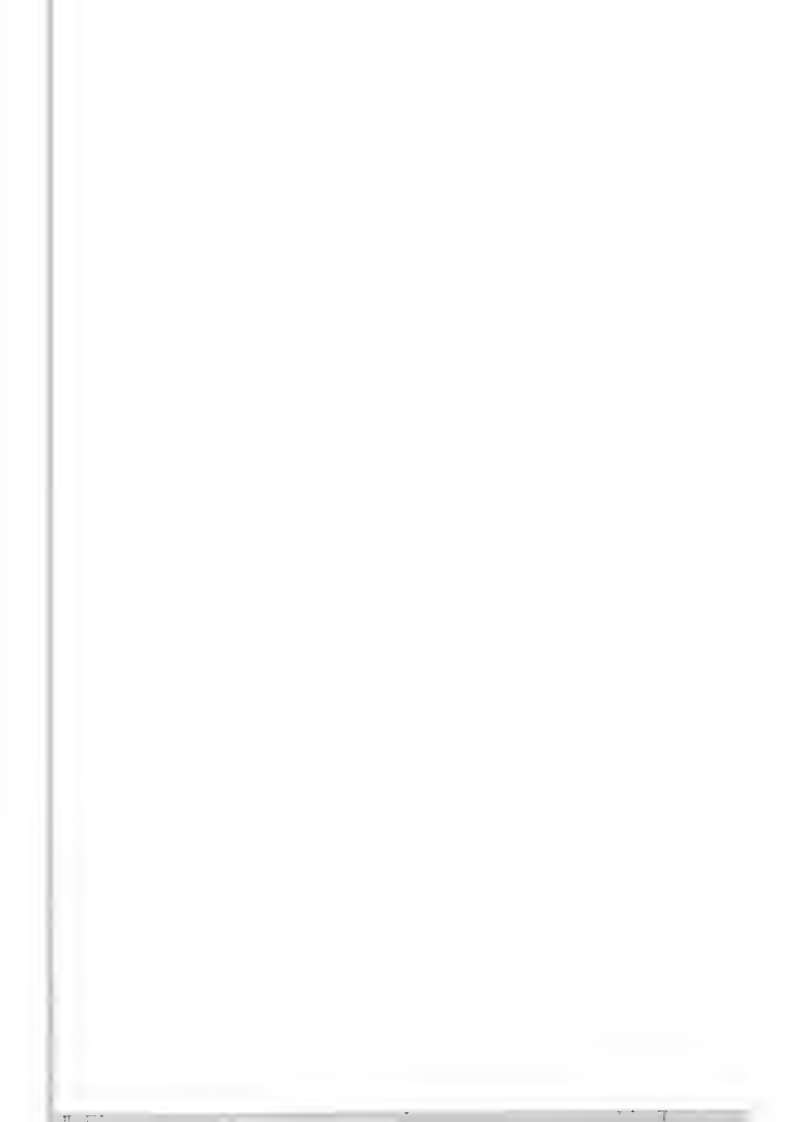
# ABBREVIATIONS

CSCP	Communist Party of Czechoslovakia [Komunistická Strana Československa, KSČ]
f.	fonds
GDR	German Democratic Republic, DDR [Deutsche Demokratische Republik] (East Germany)
inv. u.	inventory unit
JTMRT	Jézus Társasága Magyarországi rendtartománya [Societas Jesu SJ]
KGB	Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti [Committee for State Security] (Soviet Union)
KBP	Komitet ds. Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego [Committee for Public Security] (Poland)
MBP	Ministerstwo Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego [Ministry of Public Security] (Poland)
MGB	Ministerstvo Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti [Ministry of State Security] (Soviet Union)
MNL OL	Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Magyar Országos Levéltára [National Archives of Hungary]
MSW	Ministerstwo Spraw Wewnętrznych [Ministry of the Interior] (Poland)
MVD	Ministerstvo Vnutrennich Děl [Ministry of the Interior] (Soviet Union)
NSC	National Security Corps [Państwowy Korpus Bezpieczeństwa, PKB] (Poland)
PUWP	Polish United Workers' Party [Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza, PZPR]
SED	Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands [Socialist Unity Party] (East Germany)
ŠtB	Štátní Bezpečnost [State Security Services] (Czechoslovakia)
Stasi	Staatssicherheit, short form for Ministerium für Staatssicherheit, MfS [Ministry of State Security] (East Germany)
WUBP	Wojewódzki Urząd Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego [Provincial Office of Public Security] (Poland)



#### ABBREVIATIONS

ZOMO	Zmotoryzowane Odwody Milicji Obywatelskiej [Motorized Reinforcements of the People's Militia] (Poland)
ZMP	Związek Młodzieży Polskiej [Union of Polish Youth]



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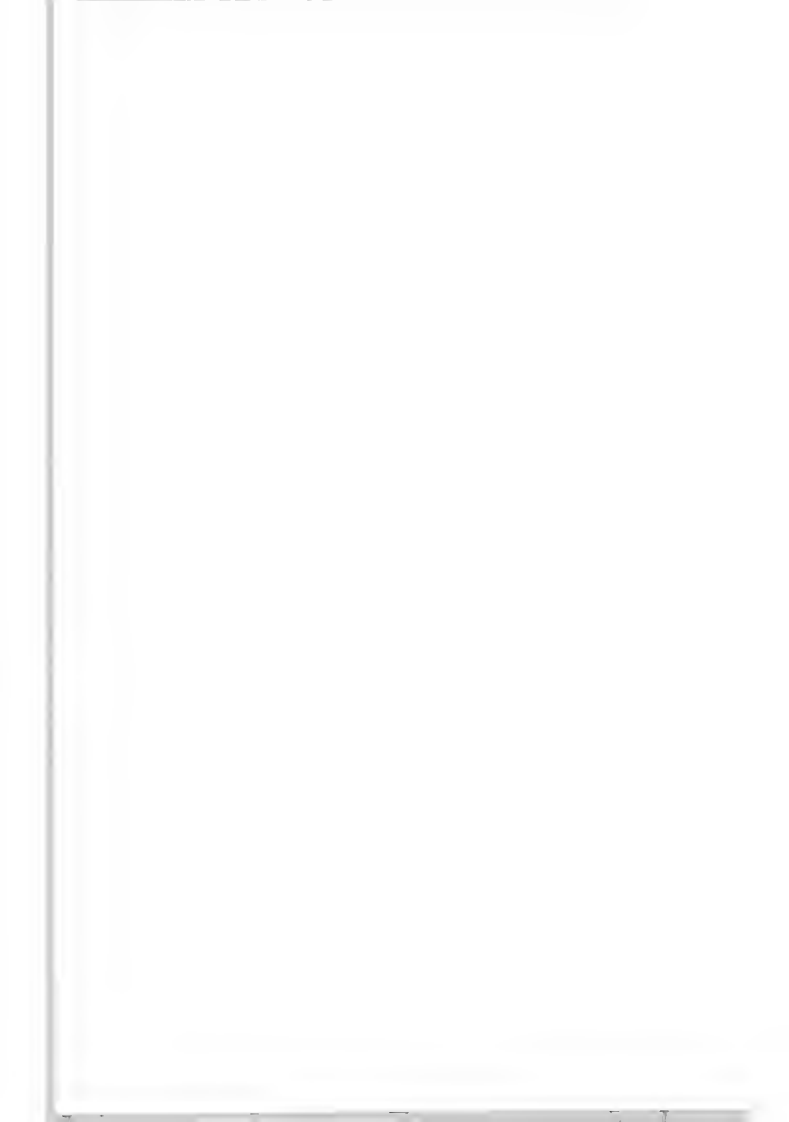
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changes implemented in accordance with how the political leadership of a given country "reacted to" the modified policies and "gearshifts" of Soviet party leadership. With Stalin's death, the relative diversity within the Soviet Bloc also became more and more apparent as each satellite state attempted to adjust the socialist system to its own national character, and this volume explores how that diversity can be traced and captured in the history of the Central Eastern European secret services.

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